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The CHRISTIAN FAMILY

GEORGE WALTER FISKE

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THE CHANGING FAMILY

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THE CHALLENGE OF THE COUNTRY

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THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

By
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Professor of Religious Education, Graduate School of Theology, Oberlin College

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IN GRATEFUL MEMORY OF

GEORGE BATCHELDER FISKE

CHRISTIAN GENTLEMAN

BELOVED FATHER OF

A CHRISTIAN FAMILY

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FOREWORD: KEEP THE FAMILY CHRISTIAN

It is the day of the changing family, in a rapidly changing civilization. These changes are largely due to social progress, and as such are usually to be welcomed. The New World is no longer only a man's world. American women have won their freedom, their economic independence, industrial opportunity in every field, unlimited education, and political equality with men. Never again can the normal American home be a male autocracy.

Rising standards of living, modern home conveniences, diversified social opportunities, the vast enrichment of life, universal education, and changing social standards have all complicated our family life. The increasing specialization of life has taken many functions away from the home and has made life less home-centered. Increasing self-indulgence has helped make the family centrifugal and the home non-functioning; resulting in the strong trend toward living in apartments. Cramped in such limited space, the city home is having a real struggle for survival.

Meanwhile rampant individualism has not only killed the old family spirit, all too frequently, but has carried the new freedom to extremes of moral laxity and disregard for many social conventions. The rapid increase in divorce and marriage slackers has been accompanied by the demand for legalized birth control, trial marriage, and divorce by mutual consent until we are wondering what will be the outcome of this astonishing social movement of our day. Mere thrill-chasing seems to be the chief aim of multitudes, and even among the better

homes where life is not simply pleasure-seeking, the great problem now is to *keep the family Christian.* This is a far more serious problem than keeping up the family income, or keeping the family fed, clothed, and educated, for it involves the moral character of the children and the honor of the home.

Not only is it true that the future of the church depends on keeping family religion alive; but we discover that religion is the chief stabilizer of the family. Divorce is ten times as common in irreligious families as in church-going families. Herein is a double challenge to the church, to do its utmost to keep our homes religious. If the church must keep the home religious to stabilize the family, and if family religion is necessary to vitalize the church, then there is nothing more essential within the religious horizon than genuinely religious homes.

This monograph is a study of family religious education. It is written in the belief that keeping the family Christian must be *an educational process.* There is nothing magical about it. It cannot be insured by the finest heredity, for none of us is born religious. It does not automatically follow, just because the parents are noble, faithful Christians, that the next generation will remain so. We are pulling against a strong tide, in the social trends of the day. To keep the family Christian we must plan a strategic campaign of religious education, that is in accord with the best modern educational practice and also deeply motivated by religious devotion. Of all the educational tasks of our day this is the one of supreme moment, upon which the Christian civilization of the future race really depends. It challenges the earnest study of every sincerely Christian father and mother.

This volume is an expansion of the author's article in the last December issue of *Religious Education*, entitled, "The Religious Task of the Family." It is a further study of the religious problems outlined in the author's earlier volume, *The Changing Family*, published last year by Harper and Brothers. Much of this material was used in lectures last summer in North Carolina, at summer conferences on education and religion, held at Lake Junaluska under the auspices of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South; and at Montreat under the auspices of the Southern Presbyterian Church. As the manuscript goes to press, the author is cheered by happy memories of many new friendships among the leaders in religious education in the great Southland, whose interest in keeping the family Christian he found reassuringly strong.

GEORGE WALTER FISKE.

Oberlin, Ohio, October 7, 1929.

I

RELIGION MUST HAVE A HOME BASE

Religious education needs to come back home. It started, like everything else, in the family circle. And, like nearly everything else, it has left home. Modern efficiency required trained leaders in the church and church school, so parents willingly yielded to ministers, teachers, and directors of religious education the religious guidance of their children. In effect they said, "Here is my child; please make him religious for me." And in signing the check to pay the expert in religion the father felt greatly relieved, imagining his responsibility fulfilled.

Uniqueness of Religious Education

No doubt the father needed the help of the expert. His error was in thinking the expert in religion could accomplish the task unaided. For as a substitute for parents the efficiency scheme of modern specialization is not working as well in this particular field as in some others. It works, of course, in the field of industry, and in the field of education in general, but not in religion. It paid to take spinning and weaving out of the home. It is done better in the factory, and the home has more important business. It paid to take "the three R's" out of the home. The school-teacher can relieve the mother here without the slightest loss. But it is somewhat different in the field of religion.

Education, to be sure, is the sharing of experience

under expert guidance. But *religious* education is the sharing of experience of *life's highest values*. In the former the parent's experience can often supplement the teacher's; but in the latter the teacher can only supplement the influence of the parent. If the parent's influence is weak or wrong, the teacher has to be exceptionally strong to overcome it. If the home gives the child a prejudice against religion, it is a very rare religious leader who is able to counteract that prejudice. If the family religious influence is neutral, it is almost as difficult a task for the church. To be sure, there are thousands of children from non-religious and irreligious homes who are led to find the great values of the Christian religion under the guidance of trained religious teachers, pastors, and directors. But where these skillful leaders have won their thousands, others, less skilled, have lost their hundred thousands.

Very many ministers are saying in these days of family neglect of religious responsibilities, "We can make little further progress in religious education until we have more co-operation from the homes of our people." Teachers can be taught to do their own task and do it well. But they cannot do the parents' task. They are poor substitutes for fathers and mothers. There is something about the intimate comradeship between parents and their children, and the subtle influence which develops from earliest infancy, that gives fathers and mothers a vastly better leverage on the unfolding minds and growing characters of the children than any teachers outside the family can ever hope to attain. Doubtless this was always the will of God. It is eternally right, for the home is primary, paramount, supreme, in the life of childhood.

Results of Parental Neglect

Religion, then, must have a *home base.* Lacking this, it is likely to die out and become a lost art. This is exactly what Calvin Coolidge must have had in mind when he expressed the belief that "the greatest need of America is religion, *the religion that centers in the* HOME." Professional priests may maintain temples as the sole places of worship for a cult. Professional ministers may keep up the machinery of churches and conduct the activities of an elaborate religious and social program. They may endeavor to maintain these churches as power-houses of the Spirit, and send back into the nominally Christian homes of their parishes the spiritual energy of a living religion. But unless the home fires of vital faith are kept burning, unless family religion remains warm and true, nurturing the children in a home atmosphere that is frankly, sincerely Christian, the religion which comes from the church to the home is an alien faith, *a stranger to the hearthstone.* It may be courteously, even graciously, welcomed, but it remains a visitor, not a member of the family.

If this be true, there is calamity ahead for the church. The loss of home religion is serious for the children of neglectful homes. For the church it spells decadence and ultimate failure. The church which cannot keep religion alive in the homes of its people lacks the spiritual vitality to keep itself alive more than a generation longer. The roots of all piety, of all genuine religious experience, are not to be found at the altar of public worship—at least not in Protestantism—but at the simpler shrines, closer to the heart of the common life, in the homes of the people. It is a vital necessity, both for the future of the Protestant churches and for the religious welfare

of our children, that religion should come back to our homes. *Religion must have a home base* if it is to do its part in meeting the great modern challenge to spiritualize our mechanistic age, to Christianize our complex communities. There is no task confronting the modern church more imperative than the task of restoring the decadent temple of home religion.

This emphasis on the importance of parental responsibility for family religious education by no means displaces our expert leaders in religious education. We shall need them more and more as the difficulties of a complex civilization increase. To say that they cannot take the place of earnest Christian fathers and mothers is not to say that we no longer need them. We need them all the more. We need them to teach parents how to teach religion to their children. We need them to teach adults, as well as children, the perennial religious values in a modern man's Bible as well as the religious interpretation of all life values. Our parents need expert guidance, that they themselves may become expert guides. But above all else they need a genuine religious experience, that they may share it with their children.

II

THE MODERN FAMILY IN DANGER

Family life in America is changing more rapidly and more radically than ever before. So serious has been this change in the past decade that the very stability of family life is threatened, and also the permanence of the family as a human institution, at least of the Christian type. Divorce in our cities has become more common than even in Japan. Jesus' ideal of the permanence of marriage is no longer gripping the present generation. They regard it as quite a debatable question. Trial marriage is widely advocated as reasonable and right, and birth control is strongly defended. The more radical are advocating freedom of divorce by mutual consent, as in Norway, or even divorce at the request of either party, as in Soviet Russia. Even in some Christian circles there has developed recently a demand for the legalizing of "companionate marriage"—a beautiful misnomer for a lawless and unchristian union of all these new heresies. Unquestionably, the frank discussion of these matters as debatable questions by reputable people has greatly weakened our social conventions and made countless people willing to disregard them.

Changes Largely Due to Progress

Yet to a large extent these radical changes have been caused by the social *progress* of the past generation. We would not go back to the family conditions of a half century ago, even if we could, for it would be turning back the wheels of human progress. Though the evolution is in danger of going too far, some change was sorely needed. The old patriarchal family was founded on

male supremacy, female serfdom, and a rural social order. The emancipation of woman, her attainment of full rights of personality, has turned the family into a dual partnership instead of a paternal tyranny; and the rise of cities, with the spread of the factory system, has developed a higher standard of comfort and a higher scale of living than the world had ever before dreamed.

With economic freedom finally won by women, they are now competing with men in every profession and in all but the heaviest trades, and in some lines of skilled labor they are proving superior to men. Therefore marriage no longer is an economic monopoly, for few women are forced to depend on their husbands for support. Can they not earn their own living? Marriage "for a meal ticket" is getting uncommon. Women have raised the passing-mark for bridegrooms, for they need not marry if they do not find their equal. No longer must a woman be the victim of the lust or cruelty of any man. To be sure, the vast increase of married women wage-earners, now numbering about three millions, has seriously complicated our family life in America. It has certainly reduced the birth rate. It also tends to increase the death rate of children. It has increased juvenile delinquency. It has vastly increased the popularity of kitchenette apartments, and often breaks up home life altogether. Talented women must not be denied their right to a career, but the supreme career, home-making and child-rearing, must be lifted to higher levels of efficiency and satisfaction, to stand the competition successfully.

Moral Chaos in the New Freedom

Men as well as women should be thankful for the new

freedom and wider opportunity for our wives, mothers, and sisters, for it spells progress for the race. But the new freedom has already gone too far. It has weakened social conventions and undermined authority. It has given superficial women the craze to demonstrate their freedom to do everything their brothers and husbands can, from cigarette smoking and cocktail drinking to sex irregularities. Meanwhile this new license to follow whithersoever impulse may lead has swiftly descended from mother to daughter, greatly complicating the situation. Thus we find many young girls claiming the rights of their mothers and older sisters, and yielding to the luxurious self-indulgence, the undisciplined freedom, and the prevalent thrill-chasing of the ultra-modern home. The greatest danger in the new freedom is emancipation from social and moral restraints in the new type of comradeship between the sexes in later teens. It has some sensible and attractive features, and is making our modern youth more natural and frank than nineteenth-century young folks were. Subtle danger lies in the fact that it assumes the freedom of maturity without adult experience and judgment, social restraint and self-control.

There are recent signs, however, that more womanly ideals are beginning to prevail once more among American girls, and this is a most wholesome and encouraging trend. Since the World War girls have to an astonishing degree affected the mannish in dress, hair, manners, and language. These are all symptoms of the common desire to prove their new liberty by defying conventions and daringly to demonstrate that it is no longer a man's world. Many girls have learned that indulgence in the masculine vices and liberties is a waster of feminine

power which gets them nowhere. Thus to disown and dishonor their sex is an abuse of freedom which ultimately costs too high. The game is not worth the candle. The present reaction against the mannish garb and the mannish bob is deeply significant. It suggests that the girls have decided to try to be as queenly as their mothers used to be, instead of being daringly smart and mannish.

Complicating Social Changes

There are certain social changes, however, which have permanently complicated American home life, at least in the cities and suburbs. Our rural homes are not yet seriously endangered, for the modern changes have only slightly affected them. The automobile has, of course, speeded up life in city and country alike and has given a far greater "cruising radius" to country as well as city young folks. But the farm house remains intact. There is little danger of farm families taking to kitchenette apartments or becoming centrifugal in their habits! Farm life simply has to be home-centered to keep it from bankruptcy.

The city home, however, is in serious danger of disruption. It is having a real struggle for survival. The strong suburban trend, with hundreds of thousands leaving the city for the suburbs every year, shows that many have concluded that city living costs more than it is worth. Countless families, cramped by lack of space and excessive cost of rent, have found it impossible to bring up their children in a self-respecting way in the crowded city and have started afresh in the suburb.

To be sure, there is the counter trend to the city apartment, but this involves chiefly childless or one-child families. It is an astonishing fact that in seven years,

1921–1928, according to a recent bulletin of the United States Bureau of Labor, reporting a survey of 257 American cities, the proportion of families living in city apartments has actually doubled. In 1921, 58.3% of city families were living in separate houses, 17.3% in two-family houses, and 24.4% in apartments; while in 1928 (April) only 38.3% were living in single and 13.4% in double houses, while the number in apartments had risen to 48.3%. By this time probably a majority of city families are trying to live in apartments. This sort of living allows the maximum of selfishness and adult comfort, with a minimum of work, but seriously interferes with the rights of children if any. Naturally, it depresses the birth rate. What the ultimate effect of this modern "cliff-dwelling" upon the Christian family will be only time can tell. But it is certainly changing its type.

Non-Functioning, Centrifugal Homes

The obvious thing which has happened to the city home is this: It has lost most of its functions. Very few reasons seem to remain for its continuance. It is just a dormitory, and a cafeteria, mainly for breakfast. What a revolution since the day when family life was the center of all human activities and interests! All the arts, crafts, and industries needed for the life of the household were housed under the same roof. They had little time for the fine arts and music and poetry; but they often did marvelously well at the fine art of living. And with all the drudgery and lack of conveniences, the old homes were often happier than our ultra-modern homes to-day.

What we call civilization has taken from the home one function after another and assigned them to special-

ists who could perform them better. All our social institutions have in turn swarmed forth from the hive of the primitive family, with rising standards of efficiency, thus setting free the home from many burdens. It has been the inevitable story of progress. The invention of machinery, the rise of the factory system, and the harnessing of modern titans of power have made these changes possible; and in their train have come all modern comforts, increasing freedom for women, the gradual conquest of drudgery, better education for children, and a vast increase of wealth and well-being.

With all the rest there have come great spiritual and cultural gains, not simply material gains. Life has become truly more abundant as well as richer, fuller, and more complex. But thoughtful people are raising the question whether this specialization has not gone too far. Has not the family life of our cities surrendered more of its functions than it could really afford to lose? Have not many parents, in their desire to escape burdens, been too willing to pass over their children to so many outside specialists that the school is the chief center of the children's interest and their old home loyalty is gone? We loved our parents, in generations past, *because they did so much for us*. But what of our city children to-day? Their parents do very little for them, in many homes, except to pay the bills. There is very little personal service, and often the children eat with their governess, not with their parents, whom they seldom see. How can there possibly be much of a family bond in such homes? Neglect of children brings its own sad penalty.

Other Signs of Disintegration

It is evident, then, that recent changes in city living

have brought new dangers to our city and suburban homes. The family group, among both rich and poor, has suffered a loss of unity and coherence and family loyalty, because it has so few common interests and mutual activities. The members of the household live a widely scattered life. The family has become centrifugal. Its members seldom do anything together any more. They have less unity even than a well-regulated boarding house, where people still meet regularly at meals. Such a home is just a place of departure and reluctant late return. How can such a home be a mystic shrine, a focus of deep loyalty and love? Whether such denatured homes can really survive is yet to be proved. There is real danger that in this social evolution one step further will be taken—even the dormitory function will be given up, and the different members of the family will betake themselves to private rooms in their various clubs and hotels, and no longer keep up the pretense of a home. It is the logical terminus of the disintegrating family of the ultra-modern type.

One of the commonest aspects of our present family situation is the increasing tendency for young wives to continue with their wage-earning after their marriage. By no means all of them are of the frivolous type. Many of them are earnest young folks, trying to make the most of life. But in spite of their high motives, they are unquestionably modifying the family type. The gainful employment of women after marriage is becoming so general, not only among the lower wage-earners, but among college-graduates, that the custom is definitely changing the American family in our cities and suburbs. These double-income families are able to indulge in many luxuries which the normal family cannot afford,

and soon their scale of living is adjusted to a higher level than the husband alone can ever sustain. This creates an appetite for luxuries that has to be satisfied to keep the family happy. This in turn tends to postpone the expense of having children and inevitably lowers the birth rate. It has a subtle influence on wage-scales also. Beyond question it tends to lower wages, for married women can afford to accept wage cuts that an unmarried woman could not stand. With the rapid increase of wage-earning wives there is real danger that wages in many trades will soon become standardized by the double-income family, with the result that most wives will ultimately have to work outside the home in order to maintain the American standard of living.

Thank God, the majority of our homes in America are still normal. But these extreme types of city homes furnish us ample warning of the dangers our modern homes are facing. In the midst of our rapid social changes and complications, the city home is having a real struggle for survival. Its functions are changing, its very form is changing, to a large extent its moral standards are changing. It is rapidly becoming decentralized, with the interests of the different members of the household scattered widely. Precious *space* has become so expensive it has become impossible for most city homes to furnish rooms enough for thoroughly civilized living, and lack of space for a real home endangers health, efficiency, happiness, morals, family stability, and even life itself. Supremely the modern family is in danger of losing its ideals. To a large extent it has lost its religion. It is now in danger of losing its ideals of its own sacredness and permanency. Thus the city home to-day brings an acute challenge to religion and Christian education.

III

RELIGION STABILIZES THE FAMILY

It is evident from the preceding discussion that we are in the midst of a trend toward pagan homes in this Christian country. Religious sanctions are having less influence than formerly in setting the ideals of family life. So far has this trend gone, it is a moot question, discussed frequently in current periodicals, whether the standard family type, the permanent union of husband and wife, is going to survive. Divorce now carries very little social stigma, and has become so frequent (in the ratio of one divorce to six or seven marriages) as to arouse very little comment. Justice-of-the-Peace marriages are increasingly common. The sacramental character of marriage is little emphasized by Protestants. Trial marriage is frankly advocated by many of the rising generation, who seem to consider it good sportsmanship to promise their marriage partner never to stand in the way of a future divorce, if and whenever desired.

Trial Marriage Growing Popular

The tentative character of the marriage relation, thus lightly conceived, is thoroughly pagan. It is evident that many applicants for marriage certificates have no real intention of maintaining a home at all. Children are a remote contingency to be postponed as long as possible, for they are an economic liability now, not an asset, as in the rural past. A permanent home is seldom desired by such partners, much less a home of their own.

The affair is frankly tentative, with friendly divorce a possible issue after a few years, unless the companionship should be surprisingly successful and become a real necessity for both. What could be further from the solemn dignity of the old-time marriage, or of true Christian marriage to-day, in which permanency is taken for granted and a permanent home with happy children as soon as practicable.

A recent writer remarks: "It will be a sad day when the clerk in the marriage bureau asks a young couple, 'What sort of a marriage license do you want, long-term or a ninety-day option?'" Yet many of our sociologists are regarding quite complacently the present trend toward companionate marriage. Some are even advocating it, with Judge Lindsey, as the best solution of the sex problem in later adolescence. It should be understood that this form of union, which is more accurately called "the companionate," is really a *substitute* for true marriage, a brazen sort of concubinage. Analyze it and you find simply *trial marriage plus race suicide*. It is a strange social partnership, for it accepts the home but denies the family. It seizes all the privileges but denies the responsibilities of the family. The companionate is merely an imitation family—an "arrested family," some call it—by mutual contract excluding children. It is not really "marriage with a divorce coupon attached," for no justice can legally issue such a coupon in advance. Nor is it insurance against having children, for no doctor can guarantee healthy people such insurance. The parties forming such a union may each agree to separate at the other's request whenever love dies; in effect saying: We will agree to be as selfish as the laws of nature and the state will let us, and will enjoy ourselves on a trial basis.

Do not call such a partnership marriage. It is only a we-two society for superlative selfishness!

In spite of the prevalence of loose ideas of marriage, it is not at all likely that there will be any general demand to change our marriage laws to make the companionate a legal form of union. It is probably true that a great majority of our young couples still marry for love, and as long as people love each other, they are not anxious to make divorce too easy, or to start out with the idea that the relationship will not be permanent. It is worth noting that most of the advocates of companionate marriage are not young, but middle-aged people who have lost their idealism.

Evils in the Companionate

The most serious element in the companionate plan is not the postponement of children, but the idea that marriage is a private contract between two parties, like any other simple contract, thus making trial marriage and free divorce allowable as simple matters of personal rights. This ignores the right of society to protect the social welfare at its most crucial point; for marriage is not a simple contract like buying a horse or a motor, but a unique contract which affects the welfare of the race. It is the most sacred contract into which any individual can enter, for it involves partnership with God in the work of creation. Marriage laws are necessary because society has something at stake in every marriage, and has a right to protect the future children from the selfishness of their own parents. Trial marriage and free divorce attack the very sacredness of personality. Some shortsighted women are advocating these radical changes, yet women should be the last to favor them, for women

would suffer most from them. The saddest of all arguments against the companionate is the discarded wife, who fails to pass the final examination and is abandoned by her unfaithful, fickle husband because he has found a more attractive companion who appeals more subtly to his unbridled passions. Such an idea of marriage would be a long step backward toward paganism and the days of polygamy. If the laws of the land should sanction such a system, we should be throwing away all the self-control which civilization has achieved in monogamous marriage by the arduous struggle of many generations. Harry Emerson Fosdick brands such a plan as "disruptive to the individual and socially ruinous to the nation." It would be a sad perversion of Christian marriage, really a substitute for marriage, for it founds neither a home nor a family. Its real motive is uncontrolled selfishness, extreme self-indulgence.

All the progress of our Christian civilization has been due to the gradual conquest of human selfishness by altruism, under the spell of the pure ideals of Jesus. This trend toward pagan homes, at this late day, turns back the wheels of human progress and insults the Christian conscience of the land. Fosdick, in a recent magazine article, states the case none too strongly when he urges: "Let us get clearly in our minds that in revolting from obsolete fashions in the ancient family we must not revolt to trial marriage. Let us see distinctly that the monogamous relationship is the only psychologically complete, emotionally satisfactory, ethically serviceable, and socially productive form of marriage. Let us get this truth clearly in our minds and make it clear to our children. Then let this corollary be taught, that marriage is the most serious decision that men and women can

face, and that therefore 'it is not to be entered into unadvisedly or lightly, but reverently, discreetly, advisedly, soberly, and in the fear of God.'"[1]

The Trend Toward Pagan Homes

The trend toward pagan homes is more general than the interest in companionate marriage. We find it wherever the ideals of Christ are forgotten, family religion neglected, and pure selfishness prevails. It is a self-indulgent age. Individualism has run amuck among us. There are too many self-indulgent children who are accustomed to make selfish pleasure their chief end in life. Naturally, when such people marry, they make self-indulgent wives and husbands determined to let nothing interfere with their own personal pleasure. They shun all possible responsibilities, for responsibilities are inconvenient kill-joys, to be endured only when they are profitable. Hence we find in all our cities a large group of married flappers and floaters, who marry rather thoughtlessly, live frivolously, and play around rather promiscuously with little thought of the future or a permanent home. They are essentially pagans, worshiping beauty and pleasure, if, in fact, they worship at all. They are mere spenders, drifters, wasters, poor stuff out of which to build a community. How shall such married bachelors and wedded bachelor-maids, with utterly pagan ideals, be transformed into Christian fathers and mothers? It is a stupendous problem, but the church must face its challenge. At all hazards we must stop this trend toward pagan homes.

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[1] Fosdick, Harry Emerson, *The American Magazine*, October, 1928, p. 20. Reprinted by permission of publishers.

Wanted: A Family Stabilizer

With the sacredness, the seriousness, and the permanence of marriage so often called in question to-day, with divorce so rapidly increasing, and broken homes still more numerous, thoughtful people, realizing the imminence of disaster, are searching for *a stabilizer for the family*. The Christian home is too precious an institution to be undermined by these subtle social changes of our hectic modern life. It has made possible the most precious possessions of our Christian civilization. They would be jeopardized without it. We cannot afford to lose it. At all costs it must be stabilized and rescued from threatened danger.

Social science, to be sure, has given us the modern court of domestic relations, with its preventive treatment of divorce. And it has given us social case-work in family rehabilitation and many social adjustments, including a better technic in serving the welfare of children. This has greatly helped. In the city of Cleveland ten years ago the ratio of divorces to marriages had risen to one to four; but this appalling situation was greatly relieved by the adoption of the modern system of handling divorce applications in a sympathetic, tactful, Christian manner. In the ten years since, the three judges of the court of domestic relations have been able to prevent a very large number of divorces by settling the issues out of court, thus reducing the ratio to one divorce to six marriages.

This, however, is still a most serious situation, and in our search for a stabilizer of the family, so seriously threatened, we can find nothing effective but *religion*. We thoroughly believe that unless both Jew and Christian come back to this ultimate source of spiritual life,

moral motivation and social wholesomeness, then that precious heritage of our civilization, the normal human family, is on the rocks, for nothing else can save it.

Very Few Divorces in Christian Homes

Divorce, of course, is only a symptom, not the ultimate disease; but it is a very serious symptom. And it is a very significant fact that, while the ratio of divorces to marriages in this country at large has risen to one in seven, *the ratio in religious families is probably less than one in fifty.* That is, a Christian home has seven times the chance of being permanent and unbroken that the irreligious home has. Or, to put it differently, the irreligious people of this country have at least seven times as many divorces, in proportion, as the Christian people have. The writer has made the interesting discovery that Christian, churchgoing people, contribute very little to the divorce statistics. As a rule, Christian homes are stable, Christian families, churchgoing families remain unbroken.

The writer has gathered data from sixty-one parishes in fifteen States in different parts of the country, covering the family histories of 22,001 churchgoing white families, including 16,940 communicant families. The ministers reporting these cases were most of them known to the writer as men of high standing and long service in the ministry, mostly in long pastorates, with a reputation for pastoral faithfulness. They know their people and the family histories of their people. We may accept their testimony as fairly accurate when they report that they can find only 196 cases of divorce among all these families, which is only one divorce to 113 marriages. And of this number, only 117 divorces were among

church members, or where either husband or wife was a church member. This makes one divorce in 145 Protestant church-member families, or two thirds of one per cent! To allow for a wide margin of error in our data, multiply by two, and even then it is quite safe to say that less than two per cent of church-attending white families in America, and perhaps one per cent of communicant families, are ever divorced. This data gives us two significant facts. *Divorces in America are mostly among nonreligious people.* And religion, the Christian religion, is *our best possible insurance against divorce.*

Why Religion Is Good Divorce Insurance

An experienced judge in Akron, Ohio, testifies that he has never had a divorce case in which the two parties were members of the same Christian church. Judge Webber, of Elyria, Ohio, with a long experience on the bench in Lorain County, declares that he had never divorced two people who were members of *any* church. There must be a reason for these striking facts. The experience of two ministers of contrasting types is worth comparing. One, a country pastor who has married only his own people, has married 175 couples, and only one of these marriages has resulted in divorce. The other, a city minister with something of a reputation as "a marrying parson," has married over twenty-one hundred couples in nearly half a century. It is his judgment that less than seven per cent of these couples have been divorced, and very few of these were among his own church people.

A certain reviewer criticizes these figures as unimportant, because "they simply show that church au-

thority keeps people in bondage and discourages their claiming their liberty." This may in a measure be true of the Catholic Church, but none of our data comes from that source. It all comes from seven of the larger Protestant denominations, in all of which divorce is possible.

We do not have to search far afield for some very sound reasons why the Christian religion stabilizes the family. It reduces our family difficulties to the minimum because it teaches reverence for personality and the rights of others. It teaches the practice of unselfishness. Unlike all other religions, its outstanding quality is kindness. It makes people more considerate and more patient, more thoughtful of others. The more Christian one is, the less selfish he grows. The whole Christian movement has always opposed self-indulgence, which is a major symptom in the disease of selfishness and the chief cause of the troubles leading to divorce. The religion of Jesus is the surest stabilizer of the family also because it teaches the finest kind of friendly teamwork and develops stable character in the process.

IV

THE RELIGIOUS TASK OF THE FAMILY

In these critical days of the changing family in America it is certainly high time that Christian people began to re-think the religious responsibility of the modern home. Our introductory chapters have revealed some extremely important points. We find that family influence is critically needed in religion, that the church is suffering because the religion of too many parents is "in neutral." This makes religion merely an elective in the family schedule, and a boy seldom chooses what his father refuses. If religion is going to survive at all, it must have a home base. We have long been saying that the church must teach to live. Let us now admit that the church must teach the home to teach its children religion, or its own teaching will soon be futile.

We find that urban family life has been radically changing in recent years. We find that Christian ideals of the family are being boldly challenged as old-fashioned. The shocking increase of divorce, among nonreligious people, is but one symptom of a strong trend toward pagan homes, marked by increasing luxury, extreme individualism, self-indulgence, thrill-chasing, impatience of all moral restraints, and disregard of social conventions, under the guise of the new freedom. The recent doubling of apartment dwellers, the vast increase in double-income families with wage-earning wives, and the trend toward companionate marriage threaten us with a variety of dangers, especially in relation to child-welfare, and even raise the question of the very stability of the family itself, which

is losing its ideals of its own sacredness and permanency. The fact that religion is still proving to be the one great stabilizer of the family, and the best possible insurance against broken homes, brings great encouragement into this rather threatening situation; but this brings the challenge all the more emphatically to the church to do its utmost to keep our homes religious. *If the church must keep the home religious to stabilize the family, and if family religion is necessary to vitalize the church, then there is nothing more essential within the religious horizon than genuinely Christian homes.*

The Kind of Religion We Mean

It is rather obvious that the most important and most difficult religious task of our day is now resting upon the family, and it is pulling against a strong ebb tide. We are now ready to analyze this home responsibility in an outline which will be expanded in the remaining chapters of this book. In the following list of concrete suggestions as to what this religious task includes, the author, of course, interprets religion broadly in its social and ethical as well as spiritual sense, else it would not be religion for the modern world. Our religion is more than ritual, sacrament, or cult, though it includes them all. It is a wonderful way of living, as natural as it is spiritual. It is the human experience of God's life and love, in the midst of our ordinary tasks. It is a life of love, faith, and service of God and fellow men, inspired by the ideals and purposes of Christ. It is the Jesus Way of thinking, feeling, doing, and being, throughout the whole range of daily living, but especially in relation to life's supreme values. From this analysis of religion it is easy to see that the first tests of religion are always

at home, and its most natural laboratory is the family circle. To make such a religion vital and effective in the family life of the nation is not a simple proposition. It involves a series of fundamental experiences.

1. To resist the pagan trend in the changing family we must first call a halt in the social disintegration which is going on within it, and take back some of its surrendered functions. *Fathers and mothers must not abdicate.* They are responsible for the character growth of their children. Let them acknowledge it. The moral and spiritual welfare of their children they cannot safely intrust to school or church, much less to nurses and tutors. There has been pretty general side-stepping of this responsibility, and juvenile delinquency has grown apace as a result. Parents must get under this burden again. Too many of them have been stealing a vacation. The home is responsible for endowing the children with the great moral safeguards of life—self-control, self-respect, a sense of honor, and the spirit of chivalry—also the primary, homespun virtues such as honesty, truth-telling, and the sense of fair play. When the home fails at this point the vacancy is seldom filled by other agencies.

Some Tests of Christian Homes

2. Many of us need to face the fact that *the home is for the children.* One great heresy of the modern home is the fact that it is too often adult-centered. Children are left out of the picture. It is time our self-indulgent, ultra-modern parents discovered that the welfare of children is and rightfully should be the chief objective of the family. Selfish pleasure, business success, social triumphs are all dust in the balances when we fail with

our children. Neglectful homes have remorse ahead, whether they have neglected their children or neglected to have children at all. Club life and modern facilities for adult pleasure have become sore temptations which have led many thousands to neglect their children. Many discover too late that nothing is worth while that results in child failure through parental neglect. Successful homes are built only around children.

3. We must grant that a normal Christian family is *a true democracy*. There has been a bad slump in home discipline and many a home is nonplussed about it. In many homes it is a sharp reaction from the parental tyranny of Puritan days. In the ultra-modern home it is sheer anarchy with everybody gleefully "expressing himself" with rampant individualism. Chaos has resulted. Let us reorganize on the basis of mutual respect for personality, frank equality between father and mother, and the new constructive discipline based on a reasoning obedience to reasonable requests, with responsibility shared with trusted children, all having a voice in the family council.

4. If the city family is to win its present struggle for survival, it *must develop a home-centered life again*. The rapid increase in apartments is only one symptom of the decentralizing of the city home. It has become chiefly a dormitory and much of the old home loyalty has gone. We must somehow get back to a home-centered life again, or disaster will follow. Let us encourage our city "cliff-dwellers" to try to rebuild the old family loyalty and pride, the old group spirit of all for each and each for all, and maintain a real home again where the life interests of the family really focus.

Let there be more home-centered fellowship for the

entire family, more family recreation, more sharing of life, cost what it may in sacrifice of selfish interests of the father, mother and older children. This will require more space than many congested flats now provide, and a revision of the complicated time-schedule in many homes, with family welfare and efficiency in mind, instead of money, "Society," and other selfish motives. Country life has always been home-centered. The farm would go bankrupt without it. How terribly the lack of it is cheating thousands of city children!

Moral and Religious Example

5. If the home would face its religious responsibility it *must set a higher moral standard* for its young people. This pagan indulgence in selfish individualism, which is wrecking so many homes in city and suburb, has undermined the moral influence of the family. Some nominally Christian families are wondering why their high-school children and college youth are running wild, why they indulge in petting parties, joy rides with pocket flasks, and wild dances with open drinking. There is always a reason, and usually it is because the young folks are imitating their parents in taking the lawless attitude toward life and toward the law of the land. In the past ten years the sentiment has grown astonishingly that one may choose the laws he will obey and break with impunity any law which he considers a tyrannical check upon his freedom. We have been asking, ever since the World War, "What ails our youth?" The truest answer is, "*Lawless parents.*" There must be decided improvement at this point before we shall have wholesome and effective home influence.

6. The religious example of parents is the next essen-

tial. Our previous five points suggest the necessary social background for a sincerely religious home influence. They are all important, for without them parental religious influence is seriously discounted. We now come to the heart of the matter, the source of the religious influence itself.

Our Protestant church membership for two decades has been increasing faster than the population, but meanwhile getting relatively lighter and less significant. We have far too many nominal Christians. A century ago there were few, for church membership was more guarded and difficult—in fact, too difficult. It is respectable now to be religious, and the religious veneer is easily assumed, therefore most children are sent to Sunday school. But too often the family religious ambition ends there. Among the social functions that the city home has abdicated is its religious responsibility, after it has sent the children to Sunday school. The more we develop a specialized ministry of religious education, the more complacently our modern families leave this whole process to the church. Various religious experts are expected to make the boys and girls religious. And they are required to perform this miracle as professionals without any but financial help from the home—in fact, often in spite of parental influence to the contrary. But parents are now discovering that it is almost hopeless to develop Christian character in their children unless they themselves set the example.

Bring Your Religion Up to Date

7. To make their religious example effective, parents need a modern religious experience. *Home religion must be brought up to date.* Too often it is a "blessed expe-

rience" far back in the past, without a blessed experience since. Too frequently it is a mid-Victorian religion which no longer quite fits the youth of to-day who discount anything mid-Victorian. It is strange how many men, who are up to the minute in their own specialty, seem to have stopped thinking religiously long ago. Though they know everything else has changed, they fancy religion is static. They imagine it is exactly what it was in their boyhood, so they have no enthusiasm for it, recognizing it as out of date. Their faith in God and prayer is all but paralyzed, because their thought of God has not grown with the years. Meanwhile their knowledge of the universe has greatly expanded, with their study of modern science, but their religion has not kept pace. Until they bring their religious knowledge up to date, and find that God is really big enough to fill a modern universe, their doubts will continue to stifle their religious experience, and prayer, the heart of it all, will mean little to them. Among educated people this serious failure probably explains most of the weakness of family religion to-day. Parents need to discover a sincere religious experience which can live honestly and loyally in the same head with their modern science and their modern thinking.

8. Home religion must be *more outspoken and loyally frank.* There is too much silence about religion in our nominally Christian homes. Mere church attendance and silent membership is not sufficient evidence to the children that their parents are religious. Loyalty to Christ requires enough vocal expression to convince the boys and girls of its note of sincerity. It must ring true. At least to bless the family meals with the grace of thanksgiving is to put the definitely religious stamp

upon the home life. To have grace at meals regularly announces simply and quietly to the children and every guest: "*As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*" This all-important point is gained by the briefer custom whether or not there is opportunity for the more elaborate custom of family devotions with the entire group kneeling. The reality and vitality of family religion depend quite largely upon the frankness with which the heavenly Father is acknowledged in daily prayer, and the altar fires thus kept alive at the family hearthstone. Of this we shall wish to say more in a later chapter.

Religious Training for Children

9. *Training in worship* and *instruction in religion* form the central program in any plan of family religious education. Neither can be effective until the parents have demonstrated the reality of their own faith, as suggested in the previous points in this outline. But when the boys and girls really respect their parents' religion they are ready to be taught it, and will learn it as readily as they adopt other ideals of the household, as family standards which rightly claim their loyalty. When approached from this angle, religion is seen to be a perfectly natural part of the home culture and the daily experience. There is then nothing alien, or strange, or exceptional about it, but it is just a beautiful family custom which makes the home life doubly precious with the passing years. The question of what to teach, and how, we shall amplify later.

10. But children must *practice religion in a character clinic* to insure the growth of Christian character. Instruction alone can never accomplish it. Religion is never effectively taught by word of mouth only. It is

really *learned* by practice. Religion is for character. The real test of home religion is whether or not the religious spirit and ideals of the family are actually getting into life and conduct; if not, it has failed, even though it succeeds in filling the family pew every Sunday and enrolling every member of the household in church membership. Religion must be lived to prove its genuineness and to make it permanent.

To get religious ideals realized in conduct is doubtless the most difficult part of teaching religion, and the careless home avoids it by throwing this responsibility upon church and church school. The home, however, should share in this task. It is possible to set up a simple *character clinic* right in the home, in which religion can be practiced, by a careful planning of homely projects of life-sharing and mutual service in the daily tasks. These projects should not be isolated stunts, but integral factors in the daily play life, work life, home life of the family and school life of the child.

11. Thus good habits of living are naturally acquired—religious habits, if you please. But it is extremely important to furnish meanwhile *high motives for noble living*, or the habits become meaningless and transient. To help growing boys and girls to meet emergencies calling for swift moral choices, we must equip them with high motives, unerring purposes, steady loyalties. Loyalty to Christ and his ideals will constantly be stressed, but this becomes merely a trite abstraction to our young folks, with little definite power, unless we put real content and practical meaning into it. In this hectic age, struggling for freedom and release, we are faced with the necessity for new motives, new concrete reasons for rightness, new grounds for character, new appeals to youthful con-

sciences that will make fine old Christian ideals still powerful enough to conquer in the battle of life. There is nothing more difficult in the whole religious education process than *motivation*, but the wise and skillful Christian home will not neglect it.

Team-Work for the Children's Sake

12. *Wise co-operation* between the home, the church, the church school and the day school is necessary to make the learning process and the character growth a real unity, as they logically should be. Public-school leaders are rapidly coming to recognize character as the chief goal of education and are frankly studying the possibilities of moral training in the regular routine of the school, both the formal and informal curriculum. We shall soon learn to work more intelligently and effectively with them. But a closer co-operation with the church school on the part of parents is both possible and imperative. For the sake of our children we must co-operate better with the Sunday school. Probably at present most city parents do not even know the names of their children's Sunday-school teachers. They have delivered over to them, with scarcely a passing thought, the most delicate and strategic task in their children's entire education. What nonchalance and carelessness!

Should we not always annex to our family circles the teachers of our children, especially their teachers of religion? We should at least know them, and discover their plans to help the children, the courses they are teaching them, the home work they expect of them. The more we consult the teachers about these courses, the more we can help them work out projects of work and study that

will make the church school a real character clinic, a school of Christian living.

In every possible way, then, Christian parents should resolve to rebuild the neglected temples of home religion. Let them seek not merely to restore neglected altars in corner shrines apart from the daily living, important though that restoration be; but let them carry the sacred flames of the altar fires into all the life of the homes, making holy all their work time and their play time, their tears, their laughter, and their joyous sacrifice.

V

PARENTS MUST NOT RESIGN

The old Rousseau theory seems to have been that parents were necessary only for biological purposes—then the state could do the rest. But this heartless socialistic theory has never been accepted, for human nature knows better. We all know that parents and children need each other. A home is incomplete without both.

Modern Substitutes for Parents

Yet it is disconcerting to see how common it is for selfish parents to relieve themselves of the burden of their children as much as they dare. If they have the means, they turn them over very early to the care of nurses and governesses. If they lack the means, the public school must be the nurse. The exacting care of children redeems us from our selfishness to a wonderful degree; but many parents prefer to be selfish than to be redeemed that way. They rejoice that a highly specialized civilization provides a specialist, at every turn, to furnish substitute parents for growing children. Formerly all the wants of childhood were attended to at home, but now the children are barbered, tailored, doctored, and shod by outside experts. They are schooled, churched, often fed, exercised, disciplined, danced, and manually trained outside the home. The expanded school schedule takes most of their time, with no protest from lazy parents, who prefer to hire even the family spanking done for them. Such families have little influence upon their children's social standards, religious loyalties or moral ideals, for these are largely controlled

by the school and other outside influences. Such children must wonder what parents are for, except to sign checks.

Few village or rural homes have reached this stage of parental neglect, but in the cities and suburbs this trend has been widely welcomed because the craze for pleasure, for excessive bridge playing, for constant motoring, for club life for both sexes, and the wave of extravagance which has submerged countless families, have changed their attitude toward children to tolerance mixed with self-pity. They regard their young children as inevitable nuisances, but propose to reduce the nuisance to the minimum by seeing as little of them as possible. Hence *the non-functioning home* has developed, which does as little as possible under its own roof, so as to set the parents free from all avoidable responsibilities which would interfere with their social pleasures and ambitions.

Invisible Mothers

We have great sympathy for little Heinrich and Gretchen, who have to take a sandwich to school for luncheon and then come home after school with empty stomachs to an empty tenement and perhaps get their own simple supper, because their widowed mother has to work long days in another woman's electrified kitchen. But meanwhile the mistress of this fine kitchen is gone, afternoon and evening, bridge-obsessed and theater-crazy, and her own Reginald and Betty seldom have a chance to kiss her good-night, even if they wanted to. They probably prefer to kiss the cook. It's an open question which children should be pitied the more. But it is safe to guess that Gretchen loves her mother more than Betty. She certainly ought to. And if Heinrich becomes a juvenile delinquent, only society is to be

blamed for it. But whose fault is it if Reginald goes wrong? Is it "society's" fault, or his blindly foolish mother? Certain it is that parental delinquencies account for a large proportion of our youthful waywardness and loss of ideals. No wonder so many of our States have enacted statutes regarding the contributory negligence of parents, though they seldom catch the worst offenders.

Parental Delinquency

Parents in such neglectful homes have simply abdicated their God-given responsibilities. Where are their consciences? Drowned out by the radio. Except in the direst poverty, no parent has a moral right to resign. This is particularly true when we consider the moral and religious responsibilities which rest upon fathers and mothers. In view of the twelve-point burden outlined in our preceding chapter as the religious task of the family, with its exacting and difficult demands, how can even selfish parents be such shirkers? As suggested in our opening chapter, efficient substitutes for parents can be readily found in educational and industrial lines, but when it comes to the child's moral and religious welfare, there are no real substitutes for fathers and mothers. In the realm of character, the school or any other social agency must always be secondary; the home is primary, paramount, supreme. Unfortunate the boy or girl whose home proves unfaithful to its high moral privilege. Fathers and mothers must not resign. The church and church school can supplement the family at this important point; but the best service they can render the delinquent non-functioning home is to inspire it to face its own duty, and then to teach it how to do its task honorably and well.

VI

THE HOME IS FOR THE CHILDREN

Since prehistoric days, children have usually been loved, but they are not always appreciated. Possibly the second quartet of children were more welcome in the homes of the past than they are to-day, because in pioneer homes and farm homes children were an economic asset, as, in fact, they still are in rural life. Judging by the high rural birth rate, children are much more welcome in the country than in the city. Last year the farm birth rate in this country was twenty-four to the thousand, about twice the city birth rate. No wonder, for it is almost impossible to make a living on the farm to-day without the help of women and children.

When Children Were Family Assets

The low birth rate in our cities to-day is partly due to the fact that city children are usually a heavy financial liability to the family. Even their birth is now excessively costly. They complicate the family's social problem and living conditions. Their educational costs are heavy, and the cost of keeping them well sometimes bankrupts the family, unless they were already poor enough to claim free hospital privileges! How different from the old days when children were expected to be income-producers from the day they were seven! And in homes blessed with large families, strong older boys and girls were "bound out" to childless neighbors, to work in the fields, kitchens, and dairies until they became of age or married. And father pocketed the wages

as a matter of course. The law allowed it and custom approved it. But no wonder the girl-slaves married early to escape this unrequited toil.

In those days it seems to have been the accepted theory that children were for the home, not the home for the children. It was the age of parental tyranny, when father owned everything under the roof. Children were part of the family property. In the lower social levels this idea still holds, and naturally everywhere children are the poor man's life insurance. But it is not a normal family where children are expected "to pay for their keep." It goes without saying that children owe much to their parents, though that debt varies greatly with parental kindness. The greater debt, however, is the debt of parents to their children. There is no greater obligation than the duty of fathers and mothers to give their children a fair start in life and provide for their spiritual welfare as well as their physical needs. This is what Doctor Finley calls "the debt eternal." There can be no worse slacker than the man or woman who deserts a child.

The Child Has Come to His Own

This has been appropriately named " the century of the child," for our generation has witnessed a new appreciation of childhood. This is manifested in many ways, from the popularity of child-study to the new social legislation safeguarding the rights of children and protecting them from exploitation. Our generous provision for school provileges, play facilities, children's hospitals, and the better care of orphans show what the modern child is worth to us. The increase of books for and about children, and periodicals for the child and the home, the

higher standards of child hygiene and the growing popularity of adoption show that at last the world has learned the infinite preciousness of children. The declining birth rate, in all civilized lands, has given children a better chance for adequate care, and they certainly seem to be more precious where they are few. But the surest index of civilization is the drop in the infant mortality rate. In Cairo three fourths of the babies die the first year (according to personal statement to the writer by a British army surgeon in the Cairo citadel). In Alameda, California, the rate in 1927 was only nine per thousand.

For all right-minded people, then, their children are their most precious possessions. They make life most worth living. The child not only makes the family, but usually makes it permanent. Children are fairly good insurance against broken homes, as statistics prove; for two thirds of American divorces now are granted to childless couples, who have no children to hold them together and keep them from growing more and more self-indulgent and selfish. Without children in the home, human personalities lack fulfillment and completion of character. The experience of parenthood is a wonderful developer. How deep a debt we owe our children we can never know. Quite possibly we need them as much as they need us.

Cynicism and Idealism About Children

But there are evidences of a growing cynicism on this subject that is not reassuring. As children are no longer financial assets, there are many who say they are not worth what they cost. They are more than willing to forego the happiness and satisfaction which children bring if they can only escape the burden of rearing them. They

regard them as an unmitigated nuisance, because they interfere with adult pleasures and social ambitions, so they postpone the responsibility of having children as long as they possibly can, and bemoan their lost freedom when the baby finally comes. To read birth-control propaganda, one would think children were the greatest curse on earth! Pity the unwelcome children who come to such homes. They are very likely to be neglected, unless the experience of motherhood transforms the mother. Such homes are not for the children, but for the parents, and are conducted for the latter's comfort and convenience. That such homes are legion can hardly be doubted.

We certainly need a new idealism to offset this new cynicism on the subject of children. We need a million more demonstration homes with happy, successful children, and parents who testify that the truest happiness of a family is in its children; that with all the anxiety, pain, and expense they produce, the boys and girls bring with them infinitely more joy than trouble, and that the home without children is sincerely to be pitied. Those of us who know in our hearts that *the home is for the children*, that the supreme mission of the family is to rear and train for future usefulness in the world our share of the coming generation, have discovered the inner meaning of home life and its real sacredness. For such parents no sacrifice is too great for the children's sake. All other considerations—personal comfort, leisure, pleasure, ambition, wealth, even health and life itself—are dust in the balances, compared with the personal well-being of our children, their moral safety, their open road to life.

VII

THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY A DEMOCRACY

FAMILY discipline in many homes has been difficult for a generation past, for an excellent reason. The Christian family, at least in America, has been changing its form of government. In many homes this is still in process, and the conflict is still on. The spirit of the age brought its new freedom into the family life, and something of a rebellion followed. It was really part of the social movement in which women have been gaining their full rights as persons, before the law and before the bar of public opinion. Now that women are voting citizens and can be economically independent if they choose, they have won greater respect and consideration at home. They cannot logically be treated as inferiors any longer, for the law has made them their husbands' equals.

As a matter of fact, in so many homes in the past as well as the present, the wife has been superior to her husband intellectually as well as morally, it is a wonder the old fiction of male superiority did not break down before. But now that some women, when they really have a chance, are proving superior to their husbands even in earning capacity, there is little standing ground left for the male tyrant. The statutes of Ohio still solemnly assert that "the husband is the head of the household," but some men find it difficult to prove it.

THE OLD-FASHIONED HOME TYRANNY

For most of human history, the father's word has been law at home and the family a domestic despotism with

the father on the throne. It was usually a benevolent despotism, but it was tyranny just the same, supported by the power of the state and of religion. In this paternal tyranny, children had merely the rights of subjects, and were frequently taught that they "were to be seen but not heard." There must have been many clashes of opinion in those stern days, but rebellion of either women or children was soon quelled, for the whole force of the community was back of the father. Silent acquiescence was soon found to be the best policy, and the mothers taught the children strict obedience to the fathers' will. Such a theory of family discipline, dating back to the days when girls were not educated, is founded on the principle that the father is always right and that his superior wisdom cannot be questioned! Naturally, such an unreasonable tyranny tended to make harsh, stern men still more severe, and independent, high-spirited youth still more rebellious, especially when they knew their father was misinformed or his judgment wrong. It was not because of this rigid, austere type of discipline, but in spite of it, that the old-time home with its noble ideals and religious spirit succeeded in developing sturdy character for generations, with a strong family loyalty on the part of the children.

New-Fashioned Home Anarchy

It is not very surprising that many in the present generation have gone to the other extreme, in reaction against paternal tyranny. In the old-fashioned family there was vigorous repression of the natural impulses of children. Though it was done conscientiously, it did irreparable harm to high-spirited boys and girls, who

are now determined to avoid this error with their own children. So, in contrast with their own suppressed childhood, they are giving their children almost absolute freedom to follow their personal interests and obey their impulses. They are so anxious to give them freedom to grow and be happy that they encourage them to express themselves exactly as they please.

This gospel of free expression for children has some vigorous defenders, but it is never popular with the neighbors! We all know how quickly a single pampered family of unrestrained children will destroy the peace of an entire neighborhood. Any home will speedily become a lawless place of self-indulgence when this theory of unlimited self-expression for children is adopted as the household custom. It is but another kind of tyranny, the tyranny of the high-chair, and it quickly becomes anarchy of course. Many an emancipated family, with a craze for everything ultra-modern, will continue to expound and demonstrate the theory of "the self-determination of children," but one such family in any neighborhood is enough to keep all the rest from making the same blunder.

Probably most of our homes, however, have been avoiding the dangers of both of these extremes and have grown into family democracies, in recent decades, in accordance with the spirit of the times. Even in a Puritan background this has been a rather natural change, and although the modern family is often accused of having no discipline at all, just because there is no tyrant, it is a more wholesome life for all. Austere parents in the past repressed even the expression of their love for their children. To-day it is blessedly different. The expression of our mutual love helps to develop it.

A Child-Centered Democracy

In an age like ours the Christian home must be a true democracy. Our homes are built around the children. In the best sense they are child-centered. We have learned that the child, after all, is a person and has personal rights which must be respected. The mutual reverence due to personality will keep us from much of the stern, unfeeling discipline which was rigorously applied, from a misguided sense of duty, by the old paternal tyranny. The superior wisdom of parents, based on their wider experience, must, of course, be recognized. So long as their decisions are fair, they deserve and win the respect of the children, but individuality must not be crushed out by forced obedience. The only safe obedience is willing obedience. This has to be a reasoning obedience, and only reasonable requests can win it. Often it takes time to reason things through to the point where willingness is won, but it pays to take the time. Peremptory orders never pay except on a battlefield or under military discipline. Elsewhere they are irritating or even insulting.

The Child in the Family Council

The family democracy will develop the custom of the informal home council, in which all matters of importance to the children will be frankly and kindly discussed. It always gains their confidence to say, "Let's sit down and talk it over." Children as well as adults have a perfect right to demand explanations. This clears away most differences and prevents many a threatened breach of family peace. It develops the self-respect and the initiative of the children to give them seats in the family council and to honor their opinions so far as their expe-

rience justifies it. It greatly develops their sense of justice to give them opportunity to weigh the rights in the case where two members of the family differ. It gives the child the joy of feeling that he *belongs*, whether he is younger or older, and that, when his limited experience really warrants it, his voice also counts.

The child has a right to be trusted till he has proved himself untrustworthy. Trusted children usually honor your confidence by becoming more trustworthy. This helps to mature them. It develops their self-respect and manliness. It makes them more dependable to have definite responsibilities, and to know that the family comfort will suffer if they prove unfaithful. We should be careful never to strain youthful shoulders with burdens too old for them, or to stifle the joyous songs of youth by too early responsibilities; but fitting the tasks to the age-levels develops a fine comradeship in the exhilarating enterprise of mutual living. Then the family democracy becomes a working reality, on the basis of well-balanced freedom, responsibility and mutual trust, with due respect for each one's personality, and loyalty to the accepted ideals of the beloved group.

VIII

WE NEED A HOME-CENTERED LIFE

If family religious education is to be effective, our family life must be home-centered enough to have a strong group spirit. We cannot teach ideals without loyalty to the group which stands for these ideals. Arthur Hale wants to teach his son Robert to be an honest man and true, and to honor the family name. How can he ever impress upon the boy that all Hales are honest, that they never would forge a check or raise a note or take a dishonest dollar, unless the boy comes to believe that the Hale name is really worth honoring? And how can he take pride in the family and be loyal to its traditions and ideals, without a strong group spirit in the household? The members of the family must love each other and like ench other enough to live together, play together, work together, and sometimes pray together, or how can they teach the honest and loving life of religion to their growing children?

Too Few Home-Centered Families

Here is one of the chief weaknesses just now in American city families. Their life is too centrifugal. They scatter their interests and activities so widely, they see too little of each other in the course of the week, and too little of their home. And, in fact, they move too often, from apartment to apartment, to have any real abiding-place to love or really to call home.

Real estate agents frequently advertise under the caption, "Own Your Own Home." Excellent advice and

sorely needed; but it is reported that a certain gaily modern woman recently replied to an enterprising realtor of her acquaintance: "Why should *I* own a *home?* I was born in a hospital. I was brought up in a kitchenette apartment. I was educated in a convent school. I was married in a church. I shall probably be buried from an undertaker's 'parlor.' But I live in my Packard car. I don't need a home. All I need is a garage and a membership in the Country Club!"

We should urge city and suburban families to plan their home life with family welfare and efficiency in mind, instead of money, business, the social whirl and selfish pleasures. Parental self-indulgence must quit, for the sake of the children. Parents must be willing to spend more time with the family. This will require more space than many congested flats now provide, and a revision of the complicated time schedule in many homes. Larger families in years past made a better socialized group. Children then did not have to cross the street to borrow brothers and sisters. Instead of stepping out for fun, they brought their fun home with them, and their capacious parlors and kitchens were neighborly social centers. That was before the scattering of American families to the four winds and all parts of the country. Relatives were plenty and conveniently near. The clan spirit was strong and found frequent opportunity for expression.

A Plea for Family Loyalty

There would be a great revival of family loyalty and a great strengthening of home ties if we should make our homes genuine social centers again for neighborhood young folks. There should be more home-centered fel-

lowship for the entire family, more family recreation as families, more sharing of life by young and old together. The writer knows the value, for developing family spirit, of a little shack by the lake, not too far from home, where parents and children can spend leisure hours and summer nights together. It is in leisure time, when the strain of work is off, that we discover the best in each other. Sometimes it takes only a single Saturday picnic for the children to find out, to their surprise, what a wonderful father they have, when he is far from his office burdens and no longer preoccupied or worried. They never dreamed he could be such a good sport!

The advent of the automobile in half the homes of America has increased the number of centrifugal families, with scattered social interests. But it has also made possible, on a vast scale, more wholesome recreation by families, especially since the closing of the saloons, where millions of men used to seek their relaxation selfishly and sordidly. Now, especially on holidays and Sundays, the country roads leading to woods, lakes, shore, or mountains witness the enormous growth of a national custom, as Uncle Sam's children and their parents enjoy their outings together. Average, middle-class Americans are having more good times together now than ever in the past, because of the automobile and the cheap movies, though too little of their social comradeship is actually in their own homes.

The wealthier families, in city and suburb, find the problem more difficult, for their interests are more varied and their social demands more distracting. Here is where the family are least often together, so that the city children are most frequently cheated out of their rightful comradeship with their fathers and mothers.

With the strong suburban trend, many city families are discovering anew the joy of real neighbors, and a new neighborliness is springing up in many delightful suburbs that reminds one of the hospitality of the old Virginia country houses. Too often, however, the children, if included at all, find the chief interest bridge, or similar adult stupidities.

The Cost of Home Neglect

Countless families have not yet solved the problem of a real home-fellowship for all the household. Many are beginning to realize that it is a serious problem, for they feel they are losing hold of their children as they grow into middle and later teens, their interests are so different and they so seldom play together. Saddest of all, parents who have been unwilling to pay the price of investing much time with their growing children find all too late that their children share no imtimacies with them, and have only a casual affection for them. How can they really *love* a father and mother who have shown, through the years, that they have loved their own adult pleasures more than they loved the company of their own children? This is the bitter disillusionment which finally comes to parents who have made a failure of their family, out of sheer frivolous selfishness. The surest way to avoid this worst of all disappointments is to maintain a real home now, and in spite of the distractions of modern city-living, insist on a family life which is truly home-centered. If Theodore Roosevelt could do this, even in the official grind and social whirl of the White House, it is possible in any home in the land.

IX

HIGHER MORAL STANDARDS FOR PARENTS

"Shall I refuse to drink at a dance where I know no one except the boy I am with, and when almost everyone else is drunk and they insist that I drink?"

"Shall I continue for several weeks to be angry with a boy friend whom I love and who, while drunk and when we were riding with another couple, tried to pet me too much, but apologized several times after he saw that I was angry, and who is really sorry and likes me?"

Tragedies of Flaming Youth

These are bona-fide questions from two high-school girls, reported in writing as their outstanding personal problems. Similar problems have been reported by many others within the past two years, showing that such perplexities are rather typical just now among a certain type of middle adolescents. Here we find the extreme to which "the new freedom" has gone. The daily press furnishes ample evidence. A few weeks ago, after a 4 A. M. auto accident in which the drunken boy driver was smothered to death in the mud under his overturned car, a fourteen-year-old girl testified in court, "We planned to go to a party, but decided it would be too tame, so we agreed to get some 'moon' and have a lively time." She was an eighth-grade school girl in Chicago. The other girl was sixteen and the two boys nineteen. They had spent the night in various night clubs, drinking and dancing. The young witness said,

"There were many other boys and girls there, all teed up nicely, with plenty of booze in the crowd." Then she called up her mother by phone and casually said: "Say, ma, I'm in jail here in Willow Springs. We had an accident. Come and try to get me out."

After a similar catastrophe recently, an eighteen-year-old girl was testifying before a coroner's jury made up of six prominent educators. There had been a joy ride following a gin party. One of the boys had been killed and the rest of the party injured and disgraced. The girl said, "One must drink and pet or one isn't invited again." What a code of ethics! The coroner's jury said in their report: "We are convinced that the problems and conditions which face youth are not of its own making. Youth is not responsible for the fact that social conditions are unstable and unfavorable to the development of the highest type of life." And one of them, a professor of law, went so far as to say: "Where are the parents of the young people who stage these orgies? Usually they are out at some roadhouse or cabaret, staging parties of their own, having a wild time doing all the dare-devil things their children do."

Cock-Tail Homes Make Pocket-Flask Youth

We must admit that the younger generation is largely what the older generation makes it. There is no mystery back of these child tragedies. We do not need to wonder why so many high-school children and college youth are running wild, why they indulge in petting-parties, wild gin-dances, and joy rides with pocket-flasks. Usually, the children are only imitating their elders, often their own parents. It is the reckless self-indulgence in our pagan city homes that is undermining the moral influence

of the family and wrecking so many of our youth. Just so long as this type of family takes its keenest delight in inventing new ways to beat the Prohibition law, and the children know their parents are essentially lawless and do not respect the Constitution of their country, so long such parents must expect their children to "go the limit" in social ethics. Like parents, like child. What can we expect of the children?

These lawless homes that insist on their outlawed liquor, though in the small minority in most communities, are centers of vicious influence, seriously undermining the morale of our youth. Such parents are sure to reap the whirlwind, but unfortunately the damage reaches far beyond their homes and threatens all our children.

The church must take a stiffer attitude against this curse of social drinking. Its worst aspect is—it is a crime against youth. It is utter folly to blame on Prohibition this recent increase in youthful drinking, yet many are echoing the idea as if it were true. Make a popular game out of breaking any law, and it would soon become attractive. If "Society" should take up burglarizing as a fad, and should vie with each other in inventing fancy ways to pick locks and steal jewelry, and boast about it at bridge parties and in Pullman smokers, we should soon find suggestible youth imitating their elders in becoming artists at burglary, instead of making and drinking outlawed liquor. Would the law against burglary then be to blame? We should have to blame, of course, not the law, but the law-breakers.

Living Above Law Is Anarchy

The real trouble is the low ideals which have prevailed in many homes since the war and the period of extrava-

gance which followed it. Laxity in morals comes easily when people have too much money to spend. Any increase in self-indulgence tends to lower moral standards. Too many of us are claiming the right to do as we please, to obey such laws as we please and to break such laws as we please. And this is plain *anarchy*. If everyone, or even the majority, should claim this privilege, of living above law, it would put an end to government and wreck civilization.

Parents who care anything for the welfare of their children should pause to consider this situation. We have plenty of tragic evidence to show that our young folks, especially in our law-breaking cities, are getting the idea from their parents or other adults, that there is nothing sacred in the law or the Constitution, but that law-breaking is smart, if you can "get away with it" and successfully outwit the stupid officers whose business it is to defend it. The great middle class of our citizenship, always the staunch, Christian strength of our nation, have never had any sympathy with this attitude. But two large elements in our population, strangely opposite in other respects, are assuming it—the thugs, racketeers, gangsters, professional criminals of the underworld, who make our great cities the wonder of the world for their lawlessness; and the self-indulgent rich, whose wealth leads them to claim special privileges of every sort, including the right to live above the law. They have never accepted the legal right of the majority, even the great majority, to vote away their wines and liquors, or, in fact, to dictate to *them* in any other way. Hence they set the example of breaking the law and annulling the Constitution, and shoals of social climbers have imitated them with alacrity. This influential minority, far

more influential socially than their numbers warrant, are largely responsible for the unusual difficulties the forces of law and order are facing to-day.

Religion Must Have Moral Foundations

It is useless for us to plan a program of religious education in American families and ignore this situation. The structure of Christian character must be based on moral foundations. Where the moral life of the family is demoralized by a sullen nullification of the fundamental law of the land there is created an atmosphere in the home that makes real character education impossible. It is poisoned at the source. The efforts of Christian teachers to develop here a wholesome, effective Christian home are defeated at the start. Fathers and mothers who remember the strong moral influence of their own early homes, so distinctly Christian, and wish to have similar influences around their own growing children, would do well to reflect that only a law-abiding home can exert such an influence. They must clean up their own social habits, and stop entertaining their friends with bootleg liquor, and show their respect for law and order, or they must take the consequences. Their children may or may not grow up to disgrace the family in the days of flaming youth; but at least they cannot hope to teach them Christian ideals, and an effective program of religious education for their growing characters.

There are many homes where higher moral standards are needed along more lines than one. It is probably true that weakening the social conscience in regard to the liquor law has made law-breaking easier in every other respect. If one may drink whatever he pleases, and buy whatever he pleases, in spite of the law, then,

by exactly the same principle, he has a right to use whatever drugs he pleases or do anything else he pleases, as his sovereign impulses may demand. Many nominally Christian homes have fallen into the habit of gambling lately, to add zest to the bridge table or other games of cards. Usually it is for petty stakes, and is not commonly considered gambling in the earlier stages of the habit. The prevalent theory seems to be that it is all right to play for money if you do not risk more than you can afford to lose!

In a recent research project in religious education the writer had occasion to conduct an experiment in the junior high-school department ("Intermediates") of a certain suburban Sunday school. The subjects of this study were two hundred boys and girls, nearly all between twelve and fourteen years of age. Practically all came from well-to-do or very comfortable homes and most of their parents were church-members. Among the forty questions on ethical problems that these boys and girls answered in writing was the following, "Do you think it is right to play cards for money?" A surprising number, especially of the older ones in the group, answered Yes; and one little girl replied, "It is all right to play cards for money if you do not lose." Of course the children's answers to this question reflected most significantly the social custom of their several homes; and that was the intention of the question. It was rather significant also, that in answer to the question, "Do you think a really fine girl would smoke cigarettes?" a sprinkling of the younger girls and an actual majority of the fourteen-and fifteen-year-old girls replied "Yes." They were doubtless thinking of their own older sisters.

It is probably true that youth is the period when ideals

are at their zenith, before the period of life's disillusionment comes. For a vast number of us, ideals grow dimmer and less controlling as we grow older. We are all too apt to lower our moral standards and compromise with our principles and forget our ideals as we grow older. I would far rather trust the high idealism of the average youth than of his father, and the average girl than her mother, in spite of the common opinion about modern young folks. Youth for the most part are as wholesome and trustworthy as their training permits. If they have low ideals, it is very likely the fault of their careless parents or older friends. One of the necessary steps, then, in building up a program of family religious education, is to convince the fathers and mothers of the strategic necessity of laying a foundation in the unquestionable moral character of the parents. Parents with utterly pagan morals cannot expect Christian children. And in lesser degree, if there is a weakness anywhere in the moral standards or social practices of the family, any tendency to compromise in practical matters of conscience, we must expect these things to be reflected in the conduct and characters of our imitative children. The moral tone of the family life is determined by what the parents will or will not sanction, in all matters of social ethics. Remember the young folks are watching to see.

X

THE RELIGIOUS EXAMPLE OF PARENTS

HUMAN parents have a great variety of ambitions for their children, but they all want their children to be good. In the homes of the poor, where poverty cheats folks out of their fair chance at all good things, it is tragic sometimes to see a mother's longing that her children might have a better chance to be good.

Realizing the down-drag and the moral dangers in almost any community, many parents to-day are becoming acutely conscious of the hopelessness of the task of developing strong characters in their children without the help of religion. This is the heart of the whole problem, to which our study of social and moral considerations has been only preliminary. But it is home religion, not merely church religion, which counts most with the children. And the chief factor in home religion, its final test of reality, is the sincere religious experience of the father and the mother.

PARENTAL RELIGION OFTEN TOO SHALLOW

Religion, in order to stablize the family and furnish its inspiration for noble character, must be a far more vital matter than it is in many homes. It must not be a mere elective, or an unimportant luxury. It should be regarded as a prime necessity for living a life. Nor may it be a mere heirloom, a respected but neglected tradition. It must be a present, living experience. There needs to be some vital contact with God, a vivifying relationship with the Supreme Power, a personal

experience that affects our happiness, controls our conduct and forms our character. Whether this experience is really sincere the children will unerringly know. They can instinctively feel whether this religion of ours really matters to us or not. If they find that it matters little to us, that it has little effect upon our manner of living, it will matter little to *them*, whatever we may *say* about it.

The fact is, too many Protestants are only nominally religious and their religion is merely churchianity. It is chiefly expressed in occasional church attendance on Sunday and seldom lasts through the week. So far as the children can see, it was left at church with the hymn books. Church attendance is an important part of the religious example of parents. It is very essential. But equally essential is their sincere expression of religion in the daily life of the family. Our home religion needs to be outspoken and frank to have a strong influence upon the children. To recognize the providence of God by the regular habit of asking the blessing and returning thanks at the daily meals is to put the definite stamp, the hall-mark, upon a religious home. The children who are brought up to it are grateful for it. It seems the most natural thing in the world to them, so appropriate a custom they miss it if it is ever omitted.

A little girl of five recently had the rare privilege of being the only guest at dinner in a neighbor's house. When all were seated, she bowed her head, as was her custom at home, and waited for something to happen—but nothing happened, except the momentary embarrassment of her host. The well-bred little miss said nothing, but it was obvious that she was disappointed and a bit perplexed. A few weeks later the same little girl was a

guest again at the same table. Again she bowed her head, from sheer habit. And this time it happened. The host in simple words returned thanks for the family meal and the common blessings of the day. And it was a happier meal for the little child, who had taught that quiet lesson, and for all the rest.

The Old Home's Lasting Influence

Millions of men and women would doubtless testify that the strongest influence on their lives, one that has lasted undimmed through the passing years, has been the example of a godly father or a praying mother. Many a saintly mother of our sacred memories, in times of special anxiety and stress, was made strong to bear her heavy burdens and keep sweet through it all, by a prayer life as unostentatious as it was genuine and precious. In the midst of a hard day she would disappear for a few minutes, but when she reappeared, with a radiant, untroubled face, the children knew where she had been. And from that upper room she had brought a peace and even a mystic Presence which made holy the common task.

It is hard to get away from such memories, go where you will. The picture is indelible of the father sitting at the head of the family pew, invariably in his place regardless of the weather or the season, never taking a vacation from religion, summer or winter. When such memories are gilded by a well-tried faithfulness to his faith, in the daily living of such a father, it is hard for the sons or daughters of such a home to become modern pagans. There are exceptions, to be sure, but probably few people are deeply religious to-day who did not have the example of such fathers and mothers to inspire their

childlike faith with the sense of the deep reality and naturalness of religious experience.

There is real encouragement in all this for parents to-day. We may be sure that the sincere religious example set by fathers and mothers still counts, even with our modern children who pretend not to be pious. But heirloom religion which is a cooled-off formality is poison to them. And religion chiefly concerned with preparing one for safe arrival in the next world does not interest them, for it has too little value hear and now. For modern young folks, the acid test of religion is its power to help folks involved in the social complications of present-day living to solve their present problems. Whatever insurance religion may or may not have on happiness in the next world, it must have some real effect on current life, character, and conduct, to prove out with our keen modern young folks.

The New Plan of Home Dedication

An interesting new method of putting a definitely religious stamp on a Christian home is the custom of *home dedication*. Sporadic instances have been discovered earlier, in Texas and elsewhere, but as a real movement it originated with Professor H. Augustine Smith, of Boston University, in 1926, when he called in his neighbors to help him dedicate his beautiful new home in Wellesley. It was done impressively; the plan seemed too promising and significant not to be shared, and it has been given wide publicity for nearly four years and has been adopted by countless families in our own and many lands. Home Dedication Day, this year the last Sunday in March, has come to be widely celebrated. A year ago in a county in Pennsylvania all but six

churches in eighty-eight observed the day. The same day twenty Christian homes in Sendai in north Japan were freshly dedicated to Christian living. Many newly married couples in a parish in southern California met with their pastor and his wife for the reconsecration of their lives and homes.

Perhaps the most significant use of this beautiful custom is to dedicate a new home, with prayer and song and appropriate poetry, to become the beloved abiding-place of a Christian family. This appropriate hymn may be sung to the tune "Whittier" to express the spirit of it all:

"O Thou whose gracious presence blest
The home at Bethany,
This shelter from the world's unrest,
This home made ready for its Guest,
We dedicate to thee.

"We build an altar here, and pray
That thou wilt show thy face.
Dear Lord, if thou wilt come to stay,
This home we dedicate to-day
Will be a holy place."

Among the beautiful and fitting acts of dedication are the dedication of the windows, the cornerstone, the hearthstone, the lintel and the doorway and the pictures, using an appropriate poem for each, such as Oxenham's "Inscriptions for the Cornerstone and the Lintel," Guiterman's "House Blessing," Untermeyer's "Holy Shrine," and this bit of modern idealism by Earl Marlatt:

The Hearth Fire

"There's something about a torch-lit fire
That kindles the tinder of lost desire;

"That wakes in the rose-gray glow of embers
The flaming April that love remembers;

"The summer-haze of toil and trouble,
Becoming an evanescent bubble;

"The frost, they too are only seeming.
The fire burns on; it is not dreaming,

"But truth that speaks of the fire-lit dome
Of sky and stars as heaven and home."

A biblical passage may well be read from the book of Ecclesiasticus, beginning with, "The chief thing for life is water, and bread, and a garment, and a house to cover shame. Better is the life of a poor man under a shelter of logs, than sumptuous fare in another man's house." Doctor Rauschenbusch's "Litany For All Fathers and Mothers," one of his "Prayers of the Social Awakening," may be used with deep impressiveness; and this beautiful dedication prayer by Dr. W. M. Horton: "O Thou, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, in whose eyes all homes and families are precious, as citadels in the growing domain of the coming Kingdom of Love, we dedicate and consecrate to thee this hearth and this home, to be thy dwelling place. Within its walls, sheltered from the stormy winds of dissension and ill will, may only kindly and generous thoughts be fostered. May friends and neighbors, and the stranger within our gates, find here unfailing good cheer and hospitality. And may the Spirit of Christ go with us and with them, in all our going out and our coming in, from this time forth and even forevermore. Amen."

An Atmosphere for Child Religion

Such a dedication service helps to convey the idea to all the household that a Christian home is a sacred place, just as truly as a consecrated church, for the Spirit of God the Father dwells in both. It may be made a real sacrament and help to transfigure the commonplace life of the home and give fresh beauty and meaning to its fellowship. In many a family there is a wealth of latent religious feeling which such a service might discover. To give religion a chance to breathe in our ordinary homes, we need some means of escape from the deadening influence of the commonplace routine. When the same people live together decade after decade, they take too much for granted. They need to be jarred out of the deep ruts of homely custom; they need a fresh sense of mutual appreciation and love and the preciousness of each to the other. Exactly this experience comes when a great sorrow, a common grief, or a supreme joy comes to the family. They discover then what they mean to each other. Happy the family whose griefs and joys are made doubly sacred and significant by a steady faith and a daily dependence upon God. It makes trebly strong the bond which binds the family together in a human fellowship of joy and sorrow. It creates an atmosphere in which trustful childhood may grow most naturally and beautifully in the graces of Christian character, and develop into sturdy and trustworthy youth, on the way to full maturity.

XI

BRING FAMILY RELIGION UP TO DATE

LIKE the manna in the wilderness, religion is good only for a day at a time. There is a strict "statute of limitations" in religious experience. Sufficient only for the day is the religion thereof. Yesterday's faith does not wing to-day's prayer. A man's boyhood religion does not save him in his struggles of maturity or his old age. It must be renewed day by day to stay effective. A blessed experience long ago is stale to-day, and must be "outlawed" at the bank of heaven. Only our present experience of God's reality, his presence, his love, his power, makes us strong to live, to resist evil, to suffer victoriously, to do his will steadfastly. A vital religion must be kept up to date.

A WANING EXPERIENCE IS FUTILE

This is particularly true of religion in the home. A waning faith is soon detected by the family. A personal religious experience, born long ago, but afflicted with arrested development, has the status of *a moron* in any bright family. It forfeits the respect of children, and stirs no reverence in adolescent youth. This is exactly what sounds the knell of religious influence in many a home. Of all antiques, the only perfectly useless and worthless antique is an outgrown faith, an antiquated Christian experience, an outlived personal religion. It lacks even the picturesqueness of a mummy.

An anaemic religion may be vitalized by exercise, by real religious living and revived religious loyalties, but what it needs most is to be fed. It must come back to

the sources of life again. It must find God once more. Would you exert a real influence on your children religiously. Then religion, the living experience of God's presence and his guidance of your life, must be such a vital and genuine thing as to be silently evident, as well as frankly confessed in the family circle. This reality is gained by the persistent honest quest for the Father-God in worship, both public and private.

But there is often an intellectual reason for this difficulty, that is not overcome either by persistence in religious routine or loyalty to religious ideals. Many a man's religion to-day is paralyzed by silent doubts, and we may as well acknowledge it here. Quite likely it is because a twentieth-century man, thoroughly modern in everything else, is trying to live by an eighteenth century understanding of religion. He has the notion that religion is static, while everything else has moved and changed. He has learned to measure his growing universe by millions of light-years, and the life of this planet by hundreds of millions of years. Science has vastly expanded his world and explained to him the laws of cause and effect. The growing world of human knowledge has so interpreted life to him that he is inevitably wiser than his fathers could possibly be. There is so much more to know. Yet his conception of God has not grown with his universe. He must bring his religious *thinking* up to date, or his faith will stay paralyzed.

The faith of many good people is feeble to-day because they have lost the old Bible and have not found the new. That is, they have lost confidence in the old traditions and interpretations they were taught as children, but have not found their way to modern convictions which will stand the acid test of modern think-

ing. They do not claim to know much about it, but they have a suspicion that Balaam's ass never spoke, that Elisha's ax never floated, and that Jonah's whale was an illustration. They doubt, when they stop to think of it, that God ever used vocal cords in speaking to Moses; but they have not yet discovered that he has spoken to countless human hearts since Moses, people whose spiritual senses were alive to his presence and his message.

If you are a busy man of this type, whose religious thinking has been pushed into a dim corner of an overcrowded life, then you need to discover that a part of the price you pay for being a Protestant is the necessity for doing your own religious thinking. Have you been leaving this whole matter to your minister, as if he were merely a priest? Then that is exactly what is the matter. You have failed to exercise your right and freedom to study and think, yet your Protestant conscience insists that you *must* think, that your faith must be reasonable in order to be valid.

Take Time to Study Religion

What myriads of busy men and women to-day need to do is to take time for constructive religious thinking, time to read modern books, to consult and discuss with experts in religion and then come to their own well-considered conclusions. Only when you do this will you discover that you can become just as intellectually honest in the field of religion as in any other realm of experience. For thinking people this is the only cure for the paralysis of faith that is caused by doubts. Of course it takes time to study and understand the modern constructive interpretation of the Bible, but until you

discover its vital values in the living messages of the inspired lives back of the Book, you are apt to have a palsied faith, bothered by blind suspicions, which you hardly dare express, that there is little left of the religion of the fathers. Don't be an up-to-date man with an antiquated faith any longer. Bring your religion also up to date.

The fact that over three hundred million copies of the Bible, in over eight hundred languages and dialects, have been printed by the British and American Bible Societies, with an increasing number each year, suggests that the Bible is a deathless book. Its lasting popularity is unique in all history. There is life in the book. Men find *God* in the book, and they find in the book *God's method with men.* That's enough to make any book live. We go to the Bible, not for our science, but for religion. Its specialty is *righteousness and the will of God,* and its great messages are on these greatest of subjects. Its picture of a flat and stationary world simply reveals the sort of a world people then imagined. But we do not have to accept their astronomy or geology. What interests us is that the Bible is a book of life, of human and divine life, not a book of natural science. Long ago a man wiser than his day remarked, "The Bible shows us how to go to heaven, not how the heavens go." Supremely, of course, it brings us Jesus Christ, and his knowledge of God and redemption, his wonderful way of living.

Find Inspiration in the Modern Bible

What has caused most of the trouble about the Bible is the old discarded view of verbal inspiration, which the Bible never claims for itself. To be sure, there is real

inspiration in the book, but it is inspiration, not of the words or the printed or written pages, but of the lives of inspired prophets and apostles, in whom God's Spirit dwelt, and whose messages are eternal messages of life. They testify that they actually found God and found him a real power in their lives. This is the uniform message of the prophets and of Jesus as well. The Bible is a library of the religious experience of the greatest seers of antiquity, who tell us how to find God. "The eternal value of the Bible," says a modern scholar, "is in the clearness, the fullness, the richness, the certainty of that idea of God, which lifts this literature into its place of supremacy in the literature of the world." John 17.3 states very concisely the underlying purpose of it all: "That they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent."

In all the noblest passages of the Bible we may find God. We find him with Moses and with Elijah on the same mountain, as his still small voice sends both of them back to duty. We find him speaking quietly to young Isaiah as he worshiped in the Temple and sent him, awe-struck and thrilled, into his life-work as a prophet, while the air of the Temple-spaces seemed vibrant with the divine presence. We find him also in the tender passages in the Psalms which tell us the intimate story of religious experience both of struggle and quiet submission, of men whose hearts responded to God's guiding, sustaining presence. We find him again and again in the heroic experiences of the prophets, Amos, Hosea, Jeremiah and all the rest whose minds were open to his voice and in tune with his great purposes. Exactly so with Peter and John and the other New Testament worthies who found God in the character

of Jesus Christ and point the way for us to discover him there. As a progressive revelation of God to men, the Bible is still matchless. But each book bears its own message, peculiar to its age and to itself. To master these messages and understand their deeper meanings takes more than superficial study. It takes years of patient search, guided by the wisest teachers, but the quest brings its rewards in stronger faith, answered doubts, deeper understanding of God and his ways in the world of men. It gives us the key to the kingdom of heaven and teaches us to share in "the life which is hid with Christ in God."

Rediscover the Meaning of Prayer

But even more essential than this matter of finding an intellectual resting place for faith through fresh Bible study, is *recovering the heart of religion in prayer.* The discovery of God's nearness, his immanence in all nature as the soul of all life, makes prayer far more simple than it used to be when we thought of God as far away. There is a fresh reality in the meaning of the Holy Spirit for modern folks who feel the throb of a present God revealing his ways in all the "resident forces" of life of which science speaks. Here is no conflict but a splendid unity.

A study of the psychology of Jesus' prayer life is most illuminating, and is helping many thoughtful people to find reality in prayer as the channel through which the power of God can recharge the depleted psychic vitality of weary men, and furnish fresh poise, elasticity, insight, and strength for the next day's living. Thus it was that Jesus, when his spiritual energies were overtaxed by his generous life of self-giving, life-sharing, was made strong again, day after day. The self-renew-

ing processes of prayer rested him, revitalized his will, and strengthened his consciousness of God's nearness and his harmony with him. Thus the renewing tides of God's power flowed in upon his soul and made it possible for him to live the victorious life. Exactly this is what prayer should be worth to the burdened father and mother to-day. It releases the stored-up spiritual energies of our lives, and the divine resources near at hand, and makes us *supermen*, that is, *men plus the power of God.*

Thus religion reduced to its simplest terms, as friendship with God, raised to the *n*th power, can be found perfectly in harmony with the best modern thinking and experience. Modern faith need not be palsied and halting because of doubts one fears to face and think through. It is the common experience of countless homes that when the children come to the later high-school or college age they come inevitably in contact with the mind-stretching, faith-testing ideas of science. All laboratories are great eye-openers. Unless fathers and mothers have shared this experience and understand its meaning, and have adjusted their understanding of religion to it, how can they help their children to go through this testing time unscathed? The parents to be pitied are those who fear lest science will destroy their Bible and their faith, and helplessly fear this same experience for their children. *Have faith in your faith* and have a faith you can trust. If it cannot stand the light, it is hardly worth having. But the religion of Jesus can stand every testing. In him was light, and his light is the life of men. With a religion you can wholly trust, you can whole-heartedly, confidently teach it to your children.

XII

HOME TRAINING IN WORSHIP

A DIFFERENCE of opinion at once arises when the question is raised, How early should we begin to teach children religion? A smart young Harvard Sophomore once said to the writer, "There ought to be a law against teaching helpless children under twelve anything about religion." Few people agree with his dictum, however. Most people agree heartily with Stevenson's beautiful sentiment:

> "It is very, very nice to think
> The world is full of meat and drink,
> With little children saying grace
> In every Christian kind of place."

And although the fad is increasing to delay all training until the child impulse demands it, it is probably true that more families feel the necessity of teaching little children a bedside prayer than manifest any other interest in religion. Whether or not they have family prayers or grace at meals, or even attend church with any regularity, they still observe the family tradition with young children, sometimes very early. Perhaps it is natural that the coming of the first baby should cause a fresh religious interest in the family. The first experience of parenthood gives a new and beautiful meaning to life and brings the heavenly Father nearer; and even though prayer seems difficult and awkward to the parents, they want at least to start the baby right.

In normal Christian homes, where the spirit of worship

is a part of the family heritage, to share this heritage with the young children is as much taken for granted as to give them the family name. Nor do they delay until the child reaches years of understanding. He is born into the atmosphere of Christian love and devotion, and the spirit of reverence and worship is a part of his native environment from the beginning. Why exclude him until he understands? Psychologists are insisting more and more that the dawning years of child life are most strategic for education and for character. Probably most children receive "a fundamental set" of character and personality before they learn to talk plainly. The depth of the earliest impressions can hardly be estimated, but character certainly begins at birth. An observant writer says: "The truth of the matter is a child begins building his character in the cradle. A quiet, happy, harmonious home atmosphere, coupled with regular, intelligent, physical care of the baby during its first year, has more to do with the ultimate character of the child than most of us have yet dreamed."

We shall need to include, then, in any program of home training in worship, at least seven fundamental experiences for the growing child: (1) unconscious impressions from a worship environment; (2) praying *with* father or mother; (3) personal prayer habits started, using suggested prayers; (4) a prayer desire aroused; (5) original prayers encouraged; (6) prayer experience explained and developed; (7) sharing in the family worship.

Unconscious Impressions

The earliest prayers are mother's prayers, beginning long before birth. They mean everything to the young mother. Perhaps she had never before felt that prayer

was very real, and God had been only a glorified haze, not a Friend. But the mother-experience brings God near and makes prayer real. It sanctifies many a modern madonna, with pure and holy longings for the little child that is to be. It raises in her heart higher ideals, nobler standards of beautiful living, of real unselfishness, of joyous sacrifice, all for the sake of the child. And even long after birth the baby is still part of the mother's life. She has hardly a moment's thought apart from him, or he apart from her. He instantly reflects her moods, her feelings, her expressions of face or voice. Is she vexed, impatient, irritable? He is fretful and fussy at once. Is she well-poised, unworried, smiling? Her joy and peace find instant reflection in the baby's face. For awhile the two faces seem but one personality, so inseparable is the psychic life of the mother and her nursing child.

How subtle, then, are the inarticulate influences which unfold the spiritual life of the baby! It is long before the child can understand or talk about them, yet these unconscious impressions have holy meaning, at the sunrise of his soul. No one has described this with more beautifully delicate touch than Mrs. Mumford in her oft-quoted passage from *The Dawn of Religion:*

"The tiny baby, now a few months old, is lying awake in his cradle, ready for his evening sleep. His mother is kneeling beside him, her head reverently bowed, her hand holding his in her warm soft clasp. She is praying to God—praying that he will care for her baby through the coming night, care for him in the coming years of youth and manhood. The touch of her hand, the sound of her voice, the sight of her face, as she kneels there, from the first in some dim way, vaguely modify the

contents of his little mind—even though as yet he can understand nothing of what it all means. Still, as each night she prays, as each night, month after month, this same group of sense impressions has been passively received in his baby brain, invariably registered, then unconsciously analyzed and compared, gradually the group as a whole stands out in his mind with a certain degree of definiteness. When his mother *prays*, her attitude, her tone of voice, her expression of face, the very touch of her hand, are different from what they are at any time and under any other circumstances; and to this difference the child instinctively responds. Silently and unconsciously, *her* reverence, *her* love, communicated to him, in some strange and exquisite way, along the chords of human sympathy, call forth in him, almost from the first feelings akin to her own. What she feels, he too begins to feel; and a child is capable of religious feeling long before he is capable of religious thought."[1]

Praying With Mother or Father

As the first months rapidly pass, and the baby begins to penetrate the mystery of word-meanings, these impressions become less unconscious, much more definite. Then the audibly expressed prayers of the mother become better understood. The baby catches something of their meaning. Mamma is talking to Someone about *him*. She is saying she is glad for her little boy. She is asking Someone to keep him safe in the big, kind, quiet Dark. She is asking Someone to help him to be good, to be kind to his kitten and to everybody, and not to quarrel with sister or break her doll again; and to keep them all happy and well.

[1] Mumford, E. E. R., *The Dawn of Religion*, p. 9; Longmans, Green & Co. Reprinted by permission of publishers.

Then the baby learns to fold his tiny hands and close his eyes like mamma while she prays for him and all the family. It would seem just a little like a game, except that mamma means it so much that he knows she isn't playing. It surely is not make-believe. She wouldn't look and sound so earnest. Thus it is that the meaning of the bed-side prayer is *sensed* before it is understood, and the deep value and importance of it felt before words can express it. And when the time comes to explain who the heavenly Father is, he has already become real to the child. This shows the worth of training in worship begun long before memory dawns. Happy the father who is invited to say the evening prayer in mother's place. It shows he didn't simply "marry into the family" after all, but is wanted by the baby to share an experience which has come to have real meaning as the closing event of a happy day.

Personal Prayer-Habits Started

The time to start the personal prayer-life will come when language-learning makes it possible and the child is able to add his simple prayer to the prayer of his mother or father. Let it be just a simple thank you at first: "Thank you, heavenly Father, for a happy day; please take care of Philip." It will be repeated, at first, two or three words at a time, at the mother's suggestion. Many seem to prefer, as the first prayer expression, "God bless Philip." But it would be long before these first two words would have any real meaning. The words "thee" and "thou" in early prayers are also questionable, except in Quaker homes, for they are never used in any other connection and tend to make the prayer experience unnatural and quite separate from

actual living. "Thank thee" means nothing to the child, but "Thank you" means much.

It is an open question whether to teach a formal prayer, in verse form, to the child, but custom still favors it. Verse is most easily remembered, and children like the music of it even before they can fully understand it, so it aids in the habit forming. But if such formal prayers are used as the regular custom, they should not displace informal, spontaneous expressions of the child's very own. This is a useful variation of the old favorite:

Now I lay me down to sleep.
I pray you, Lord, my soul to keep.
May love be with me all the night,
And keep me safe till morning light.

If objection is raised against using the rather adult word *soul*, the second line might be changed to, "I pray you, Lord, your child to keep." When the child is a little older and welcomes a little longer prayer, these two modern forms have much to commend them:

Father, if in my work or play
I have done what's wrong to-day,
Forgive me ere I sleep, I pray.
O keep me safe in sleep to-night
And let me wake at morning light
To love you more and do the right.

I thank you, heavenly Father dear,
"There's nothing in the world to fear,
For God is love and God is near.
I am God's little child and he
Will keep me safe as safe can be,
In work and play, by night and day."[2]

[2] The first of these is considerably adapted from an original form by Frederica Beard; and the second is slightly changed from a verse by John Martin, the original source of which we have been unable to locate.

The use of memorized prayers at bed-time is with many children, naturally, quite a formal matter which may have but little meaning. The custom is a valuable one, just to start the habit of prayer, which should take on more meaning as the years pass. But perhaps the real test of a personal prayer-life is the morning prayer at waking time. To be sure, the little tot often runs to his mother before he is half awake, and cares more for her morning kiss than a morning prayer. But as he outgrows that, and the time comes when his eyes pop open wide awake, it is fine to teach him the custom of speaking first to the heavenly Father, and starting the day with his morning prayer. Such a simple prayer as this might be used at first:

Father, help me all this day,
In my tasks and in my play,
In all I am or say or do,
Ever to be pleasing you.

A still simpler one is suggested by Miss Beard:

"Lord bless thy little child to-day,
Make me good and kind, I pray."[3]

Among the beautiful prayers suggested by Mrs. Betts, in her *Mother-Teacher of Religion*, are the following:

"Jesus, keep me safe to-day
In my work and in my play.
I will try to do and say
Only what is right."[4]

[3] Beard, Frederica, *Prayers for Home and Sunday School.* Doubleday, Doran & Co., Publishers, Garden City, N. Y. Reprinted by permission of publishers.

[4] Davis, Ozora S., *At Mother's Knee.* Published by The Abingdon Press, New York.

"For this new morning with its light,
For rest and shelter of the night,
For health and food, for home and friends,
For everything thy goodness sends,
We thank thee, heavenly Father."[4]

"Jesus, friend of little children,
Be this day a friend to me.
Take my hand and surely keep me
Near and dear and close to thee."[5]

A Prayer-Desire Aroused

As always in the use of set forms in worship, there is danger that children's devotions may become purely mechanical, or even insincere. Parents should avoid this by explaining what the little prayer means, and, as soon as possible, arousing in the child a genuine desire to pray. Often at bedtime children do not really feel like praying, especially when a romping game of keen delight was interrupted by bedtime, which always comes too soon anyway. Real harm is done, at such times, by making them "say their prayers." Unwilling devotions are insincere, and cant must be avoided at all costs. Far better no prayer at all. And yet it is risky to break the regularity of the habit. It might soon be lost.

Weigle and Tweedy, in *Training the Devotional Life*, quote the daring little girl who was reproached by her grandmother for not saying her prayers one evening and answered: "No, and I didn't say them last night, and I won't say them to-morrow night, and then, if nothing happens, I'll never say them again." Evidently, this little skeptic had simply been taught to "say" her prayers. She had not been taught to *want* to say them.

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] Verkuyl, Gerrit, *Children's Devotions.* Published by The Westminster Press, Philadelphia. Reprinted by permission of publishers.

The worst time of the day for parents to hurry is at the children's bedtime. It takes patience to be leisurely then, but it pays to talk the day over with them, to recall some especially happy event, the visit of some friend, or the new pet someone had given him. Then how easy it is to suggest, "Don't you think it would be nice to thank our Father for the happy day we have had to-day?" Thus the desire to pray is kindled in young hearts.

Original Prayers Encouraged

The quiet talk with mamma for a few moments before prayer-time each night is really what makes the prayer worth while. It gives the mother the chance to suggest reasons for special thankfulness that day. It gives opportunity for recalling some thoughtless unkindness, or some other reason for asking forgiveness; in short, it suggests things to pray about, and encourages originality in the evening prayer. As soon as the child really understands enough about God and his loving care to appreciate the personal value of prayer, he should be led to supplement his memorized prayer by his own original petitions and expressions of thanksgiving. This sort of training is most fruitful, for it takes the formality out of the prayer habit and gives it spiritual vitality and fresh meaning every night. The child should be encouraged to talk frankly with God about all his important interests, his activities, happy experiences, his friends, even his pets and toys; in short, everything that goes to make up his childish life. This gives a reality to his communion with his heavenly Father that is otherwise lacking. Quite a typical child's prayer is the following: "Dear God, I thank you for my father and mother and that it didn't rain to-day so we couldn't go

up in the woods and that Gyp got all well from his sore paw. Please forgive me 'cause I slapped Ella and made her cry and keep me from losing my temper when she's so slow. And thanks for the birds and all the spring violets and . . . everything. Amen"—every word sincere, and the prayer a real experience. It seemed so much like the telephone he almost said good-by, but stopped just in time.

Prayer Experience Explained and Developed

In these days of the radio and vitaphone as well as telephone, it must seem more natural for children to learn to pray than fifty years ago Yet they have their problems still and parents do well to watch for them and meet them with simple explanations when they arise. The most natural pitfall is for children to think prayer is just begging for things, and that when God fails to give them the sunny picnic day they prayed for, or the talking doll they asked for so confidently, it sadly shakes their childish faith. Of course it is easy to explain that God has to provide for corn crops as well as picnics, and that there might not have been any popcorn next winter if that good rain hadn't come just in time to save it. And as to the doll, let's think how many millions of little girls everywhere God has to find dolls for. Perhaps some other little girl needed that doll more. Of course God cannot always answer prayers at once. We should never want him to answer our prayers until he thinks best, should we?

Mrs. Betts suggests that children should be taught to help answer their own prayers, quoting this illustration: "If you should put the little gift that you are making for mother away in the closet, and ask God to finish it

for you, it wouldn't be done. We must do our part; mere asking for something is not prayer. God will help us do what is our task to do, but he will not do our work for us." And so, step by step, children are led to pray for higher things, to guide them in their problems and decisions, to strengthen them to resist temptation, to help them in their noblest ambitions, to explain life's deeper meanings to them, to keep them true and kind and Christlike.

Sharing in the Household Worship

The personal prayer life of the child has an important relationship to the atmosphere of worship in the home. The latter is the background of the former and the source of its inspiration. If there is no prayer life in the family, how long will the little child keep up his bedside prayer?

The simple family prayer of thanksgiving at the breakfast table, with or without the formality of kneeling, assures the child that God is still real to the father and mother. The prayer may be varied indefinitely, to suit the day's needs, but it always serves to reaffirm the faith of the family in God's goodness, his providential care, the family's need of his guidance and their loyalty to Christ and the Christian way of living. It develops the life habit, on the part of the children, of dependence upon the Father-God. It helps to keep religion natural. It gives a sacramental value to all the home fellowship and sets the family ideals as definitely Christian.

Such home training is of utmost value to the children, especially if they participate in it occasionally. Many simple blessings like the following are used by children as well as older folks:

For rest and food, for love and friends,
For everything his goodness sends,
We thank the heavenly Father.

Some children do their part when asked, without self-consciousness or forwardness. In case there is any indication of this, it is better for the father to do the leading himself. A variation that is sometimes valuable is the occasional silent, or Quaker blessing, or a verse of a hymn of thanksgiving. The use of well-chosen hymns is also an important factor in home training in worship. Many a Sunday night around the piano has been made sacred in lasting memory for many a boy and girl.

The custom of family devotions, on a simpler scale than in the past, is decidedly on the increase. Many churches have thought it such an important matter as to conduct special campaigns to enlist families who would agree to re-establish the custom. A number of suggestive little books have been recently prepared for family use, containing usually a verse from the Bible or a sentiment for the day from some poem, a paragraph prayer and a verse from a hymn. One of these books is suggestively named, "God's Minute," and no page in it requires more than sixty seconds.

If such home worship is thoroughly sincere, its sacred influence will never be outlived. It furnishes the children moral safeguards of high spiritual motives, renewed daily with the daily bread. It helps to win them to a personal loyalty to Jesus Christ and his ideals of living. It is the greatest single force for family unity and morale. And when the sad day comes, when the mystic circle is broken, happy the family that can come together with the perfect naturalness of long-established custom, and find help from God to help each and all to bear the common sorrow.

XIII

HOME INSTRUCTION IN RELIGION

Until recently, teachers have taken it for granted that instruction is the important thing in teaching religion. So catechisms were popular for centuries—though not with the children! We now know that we learn best by *doing;* hence the practice of religion is the surest way to learn it. And Mrs. Mumford is quite right in saying, "A child is capable of religious feeling long before he is capable of religious thought," hence a minimum of instruction with younger children. Our emphasis with them is rightly on training in worship, rather than mere instruction, as the preceding chapter suggests. Religious instruction has its important place, but with young children it must be very simple.

Teach Religion, Not Merely About It

With young or old, the main result to aim at in teaching religion is to share *a real religious experience.* When our teaching facts does not accomplish this, we are merely teaching *about* religion. That is always the danger in religious instruction. Too often it fails to contribute to religious experience. To avoid this, our instruction must be interwoven with projects, that the children may practice what they are learning, and with training in worship, that their religious feelings, ideals, attitudes and loyalties may grow.

Our last chapter made clear that the important objective in teaching young children religion is to help them

to know the heavenly Father, to know that he is near, that he loves children and can hear their prayer; to know that this world is our Father's world, that it is he who makes it beautiful with flowers and birds and all the animals; that we can trust his care, that he gives all good gifts and provides for all our needs; that God is therefore the great, unseen, loving Friend of the home and all the family as well as all who need. This great comforting fact of God's providence is well interpreted to the child mind in this simple rime:

"It is God who sends the sunshine,
It is God who sends the rain.
It is God's great loving-kindness
That gives us all the grain.
It is God who keeps our vineyards,
It is God who gives us food.
To him we owe our gladness
And everything that's good."[1]

The young child in a really Christian home, who has been given a natural home training in worship, by the time he is ready to go to school or the Primary Department in church school, has become acquainted with God and has adjusted his life and his world accordingly. His prayer life, purely imitative at first, and its meanings *felt* rather than understood, has given him actual practice in religion while learning gradually the meaning of it all.

The home that has met this duty faithfully, with the pre-school child, has laid strong foundations for instruction in religion in later childhood. Who should

[1] Quoted in Stagg's *Home Lessons in Religion*, vol. i, p. 99. The Abingdon Press, publishers.

furnish this instruction? The most natural and logical answer is, the church school.. What else is the church school for? It is a fair question to ask, If the day school relieves the parents of the burden of teaching English, geography and arithmetic, why should not the church school take care of instruction in religion? This very question we raised in our opening chapter. We concluded that the religious teachers must have the help of the parents to secure the best results. Much of the religious *instruction*, however, can be given by trained church-school teachers better than the average parents. But the parents must keep informed of their progress and supplement it when necessary, as our final chapter will discuss, to make the learning process of the child a unity if possible.

It is doubtless true that many homes will not be able to do much definite religious instruction to supplement the teaching of the church and its experts, but well-educated families with real cultural resources will be able to do much. Details we reserve mostly for suggestions in later chapters, but in general let us summarize as follows: The home instruction in religion should include informal discussion, often at table or at bedtime, of the life problems the boys and girls are facing. If parents keep the confidence of their children, this is their chief opportunity. It should also include supplementary instruction in the Bible, which we consider in detail below; and the religious interpretation of art and literature and music, to which most church schools seldom do justice.

Thus the home will teach the unity of experience. It will teach the holiness of all life, not simply church life and Sunday. It will teach the religion of the common-

place and try to lift life to the point where all worthwhile experience is shot through and through with the ideals, the motives, the meanings and the joys of religion. It must make life and religion one and inseparable, now and forever. Amen. This saves religion from the unnaturalness, the unwholesome magic, the sheer superstition, the unsocial aloofness which sets it apart from life as a nonstructural ornament, a useless stranger or even an alien enemy in the child's and youth's experience. Away with such ideas which freeze and embalm religion. and dignify it with aristocratic aloofness! Religion must be kept *useful*, a homely member of the family; as soon as it becomes an ornament, a decoration or an heirloom, it is dead.

What Should We Teach About the Bible?

This question is frequently asked, especially by parents whose changing ideas and general neglect of the Bible have left them rather helpless. Certainly, you must bring your own Bible up to date before you teach them anything. Much will depend upon the attitude you take toward it. In too many families it is a holy book honored by regal neglect. Too often it is a book of magic seldom used except as a superstitious arbiter of fate. In other homes it is neglected because of a growing feeling that it is unreliable. Others treat it with the respect accorded an old-fashioned friend of the family but never consult it for advice. Too many treat it as a closed book of riddles to which they have lost the key. For many who have no modern version of it, it is an antique, largely in a foreign tongue, like the language of the Fatherland which they have forgotten.

It is highly important that the home teach the children, what many church schools fail to teach, that the Bible is an unrivaled source-book for the life of the spirit; that it is not an armory of verbally inspired proof-texts, but a collection of reliable testimonies from trustworthy witnesses about their knowledge of God; that it therefore is the record of the progressive revelation of God to the spiritual geniuses of the Hebrew race, and so is essentially *the word of God;* that it is a part of human history, that the lives it describes were actually lived on this earth in a country that is still on the map; that it has come down to us through the centuries in a providential but thoroughly natural way; that it is so unique a book, or, rather, a library of books, that it is an indispensable part of modern culture, a key to our best literature and art; and that, when translated into their language, much of it is a precious storybook for children to learn the meaning of life, and a matchless book of ideals for youth. Such is Our Bible, often abused, maligned, neglected, misunderstood; whose best friends sometimes are its most dangerous enemies when they claim for it more than it claims for itself; still the Book of books, the joy of little children, the guide of youth, and the solace of old age.

Make the Bible a Part of Life

It came out in discussion recently in a young married people's class in church school that an ordinarily intelligent young man really supposed that there was no reference to the Bible books in contemporary literature until about the fourth century A. D.! His opinion was partly due to his misunderstanding the minister's statement that our earliest extant manuscripts of the New

Testament are hardly earlier than that. He should have known that we have a great many books written by scores of early Christian writers of the second and third centuries who quoted constantly from their Bible; so that if all the Bibles in the world were lost, we could reconstruct the whole New Testament again from the books of "the church Fathers" who wrote soon after Jesus lived.

Christian parents should be able to teach their children the pedigree of the Bible, to trace back its ancestry through the various English versions, to the Latin "Vulgate" of the Roman Church, and to the old Greek manuscripts, some four thousand of which are still in the world's libraries, dating far back before the age of printing. It is fine for children to know how these precious old books looked,[1] and something of the romantic story of how they came down to us through all the centuries. It would rescue them from the dense ignorance, all too common, which forgets that our Bible is a translation from ancient languages, that it was written by very many authors, for personal reasons and for their own day; that chapter and verse divisions are modern additions, and that the dates in the margin were invented by Archbishop Ussher only a few generations ago and were very poor guesses!

It should be explained to children, as soon as they are troubled by the cruel stories of the Old Testament, that the books of the Bible are of different value, that some are much more inspirational than others, like the Gospels and some of the noblest psalms; and that they need not be troubled by the fact that many of the Old Testament people did not act like Christians. Of course, how

[1] Find such pictures in books like Smyth's *How We Got Our Bible.*

could they be Christians, so long before Christ? They are not models for us to imitate, just because they are in the Bible. Rather are they warnings to us, as we see how hard it was for people to be really good, in those early days when people had never learned what true kindness, purity, and goodness really were. Old Testament ethics, especially in the early centuries, are crude and rather unchristian, because those were crude, rough, barbarous days. And we find the Bible all the more to be trusted because it does not gloss over the imperfect characters of the old patriarchs and kings, but paints them just as they were, with all their defects. The Bible is not a book of angels, but a part of human history, showing how the human race rose from crude beginnings to a Christian civilization, guided by the providence of God. It is important for young folks to know all this, so that they may know there is nothing magical about the Bible, but that it came down to us through many human hands; and that it survived because it *deserved to survive*, because of its real values, its literary beauty, its reliable messages of life, and its spiritual power. It is the incomparable Book of all the centuries.

Teach Children How to Use the Bible

It is a doubtful kindness to give a little child a Bible and then let him loose in it with no one to guide him or help him. Some of it he ought not to read. Much more of it is not meant for him to read, for only adults can understand it. If he tries to read it, he will surely lose his way in it, get discouraged by the dull parts not meant for him, and fail to find the noble stories which never fail to interest children.

But concealed within the big Bible there is a children's Bible. We must find it for them. In fact, it is well to buy one for them—such a book, for example, as Mrs. J. E. Fryer's *Bible Story Book for Boys and Girls*, or Sherman and Kent's *The Children's Bible*. Or guide them yourself to the stories of Joseph and Daniel, of Moses and brave Joshua, Gideon, Samson, Ruth, Samuel, Jonathan and David, Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Esther, Nehemiah and some of the loveliest, simplest psalms. It is better to give children a modern version, like Goodspeed's or Moffatt's, or at least the American Standard Revision, rather than the King James' Version with its old-fashioned language which children and young folks do not like. The Gospels, of course, are books for children, especially the brief vivid Gospel of Mark, which makes Jesus seem so much alive; and the book of Acts, with its thrilling adventure and heroic life of Paul, is one of the best of all books for active boys.

The Great Book of Ideals for Youth

We should have a graded Bible for young folks also, as well as for children. It would be larger than the children's Bible, for young people can learn to find real inspiration in the stories of the prophets, interpreted in the light of their own life struggles. The challenge of social injustice in Isaiah, Amos and Micah, and their stout appeals for social righteousness can be made to stir the hearts of youth who love fair play. Many more psalms are useful now, and some of the wise passages in Proverbs, also the Youth and Old Age chapter at the end of Ecclesiastes. The Epistles are of little use to children, they are so theological; but young folks find some great chapters in them, like the Christian Soldier chapter

in Ephesians, the great Faith chapter in Hebrews, the Temptation chapter in James, the Love and Immortality chapters in First Corinthians, and the Reconciliation chapter, the Triumph chapter, and the Consecration chapter, the 5th, 8th and 12th of Romans; those eloquent passages praising Christ, Ephesians 1 and Philippians 2, and First Peter 1. The two letters to the young man Timothy, especially chapter 6 in the first, and chapters 2 and 4 in the second, on the struggle for Christian character, have real appeal to young people.

We have a new literature growing now, in the form of biblical drama, which our young folks find intensely interesting and which they find great satisfaction in presenting reverently on the stage. Plays like *Nehemiah the Builder*, *Joseph the Dreamer*, and *The Rock*, the story of Simon Peter, interpret these noble characters to young people in a powerful way. Even to *read* the last of these makes wonderfully vivid what comradeship with Jesus must have meant.

Supremely, our young folks will find in the fascinating story of Jesus, told by the Gospel writers, especially Luke with his keen sympathy, an inexhaustible source of ideals for living and spiritual inspiration to make their ideals real. Fathers and mothers should make sure that their young folks do not fail to find these personal values in the Bible. In the years of youthful storm and stress they cannot afford to miss the spiritual help which these choicest parts of the Scriptures can give them.

The Bible's Deathless Place in Culture

So many college youth are apt to take the supercilious attitude that they have outgrown the Bible that it is

well for parents to take them on their own ground, and show them the Bible's deathless place in the finest culture. Teach them that the world's noblest music, literature, and art were all inspired by the Bible, and cannot be really appreciated without a knowledge of the Bible, and you will win back their honest respect for the wonderful Book. One of the greatest of living musicians goes so far as to state that "*all* the world's greatest music was inspired by religion, and most of it by the Bible." Recall Handel, Haydn, Mendelssohn and Gounod, and their uplifting anthems and oratorios, and you appreciate the truth of his judgment.

In the field of art the Bible has had an even greater influence. It not only inspired the erection of all the marvelous cathedrals, those triumphs of architectural genius, and many of the noblest sculptures and statues which adorn them and enrich the world's great galleries, but in the field of painting the Bible's influence is supreme. In all the galleries, the grandest and most inspiring pictures are reproductions of Bible characters and scenes. The matchless work of Raphael and Michael Angelo was all inspired by the Bible. Their madonnas and the madonnas and "holy families" of da Vinci, Murillo, Correggio, Bellini and countless other great masters, almost make Portestants worship the Virgin, or even their own mothers, so beautifully do they glorify motherhood. And the great Bible scenes and characters immortalized by Titian, Rubens, Rembrandt, del Sarto, Veronese, Reynolds, Hofmann, Tissot, and other noted artists, testify to all who are capable of appreciating beauty that the chief source of the world's greatest art has been the Bible, and for this reason, if for no other, it can never possibly die. And you will see in all the art

galleries modern pagans who never read their Bibles looking blankly at these wonderful pictures, utterly unable to understand the artist's vision until some guide attempts to explain it to them. Culture is largely a closed book, except to those who know the Bible.

This is also true in the realm of books. In the literature of every Christian people and language the Bible has been born again. Especially in our own tongue is this profoundly true. If we should cease to be a Bible-reading people, our great English and American classics would not long survive, the works of our great poets, essayists and novelists are so full of biblical allusions. How can one read Shakespeare intelligently without knowing the Bible? He quotes it twelve hundred times. How can you appreciate Tennyson, with his five hundred references, or Browning with six hundred in a single poem, "The Ring and the Book," if you don't know the Bible? And so with Milton, Bunyan, Dickens, Hawthorne, Thackeray, Byron, Bryant, Wordsworth, Spenser, Kipling, Scott, Hall Caine, Hardy, George Eliot, Carlyle, Addison, Ruskin, Pope, Keats, Lowell, Whittier, Longfellow, Holmes, and Van Dyke, and others of lesser fame. So frequently do they all quote the Bible and draw their illustrations and their inspirations from it that only students of the Bible can fully appreciate them. It looks as though the Bible were the key to all the finest culture.

Our home instruction in religion should unerringly aim to win our young folks to the religion of Jesus Christ, to an acceptance of his teachings as the purest the world knows, an adoption of his ideals as their own personal standards of living, and an acceptance of his personality as the guide and master and saviour of their lives. Our

teaching has failed of its purpose until this has been accomplished. Meanwhile, *instruction* in religion has not been the whole of our program. If we have been wise, we have been guiding them in worth-while projects, to discover through practice the real meaning and values of their faith—which will be our study in the following chapter.

XIV

PRACTICING RELIGION IN A CHARACTER CLINIC

EVERY Christian home with growing children should be a School of Christian Living. It should be a place where the ideals of Jesus and his way of living are being tested as in a laboratory and practiced as in a school of art. For living is a fine art. This finest of the arts, Christian living, can never be learned by instruction only any more than the fine arts of painting and singing can be taught by the lecture method. No one was ever talked into being a master violinist. Lectures about the structure and action of a piano-forte never made a great pianist. Lectures about religion or the Bible never made a Christian character. They may have made you *want* to be a Christian. They may have told you all about it and induced you to decide to try it; but the actual experience of growing a Christian character is gained exactly like skill at the piano—by faithful, painstaking, daily practice. No one can become an artist, a musician, or a Christian, in his sleep. He has to put his whole soul into it, give his best attention to it, and work hard at it, in the serious endeavor to reach his goal. It takes long practice, until acquired habit makes it second nature.

TALK IS WEAK, BUT PRACTICE MIGHTY

How fine it would be if only *telling* children how to be good would accomplish that purpose! We Protestants, with our strong faith in preaching, have always had

great confidence in the spoken word; yet we have to admit that just telling folks their duty does not make character Christian. Folks simply are not made that way. The process of teaching religion effectively is more than getting religious ideas into the mind; it involves getting religious habits, attitudes, ideals, and loyalties actually into the brain paths, that is, into conduct.

It is clear, then, that spraying our children with ideas, even the noblest ideas, is not educating them. It is action that counts. And when the action is repeated it counts two, in the forming of habit. There are many things we cannot do *for* our children. They must do them for themselves. We may guide them in solving their problems. But if they merely accept our solution, their problem is still unsolved. We must give them practice in meeting situations requiring self-control, quick moral decisions, and real insight in testing out their ideals. These things they must attempt for themselves.

To insure Christian character, the children must *practice* religion in a *character clinic*, then only is it effectively taught and really learned. This is religion's final test—to find out whether the Christian spirit and religious ideals of the family are getting into conduct and character. To prove religion genuine and to make it permanent, it must really be *lived*. You can never be sure that your daughter is truthful, and her word to be absolutely trusted, until she is placed in a situation where the truth is embarrassing and costly, and you find her sticking to it just the same. And how can she learn the importance of truth-telling and acquire the habit? Children are not born truthful. It is a difficult habit to acquire. But some day, when she is deceived by a

playmate, she learns by experience the necessity for telling the truth, that we simply must be able to trust our friends or there is no living with them. Planning projects and setting up actual situations in which the children will learn by valuable experience is what we mean by a "character clinic." By a careful planning of the homely projects of life-sharing and mutual service, even the daily tasks of the family can be turned to good account, as laboratory work in the practice of religion.

Teach the Habit of Dependableness

We all realize the importance of regular duties in the home to develop a child's habit of dependableness, and thus help him to outgrow his childishness. The careless home which neglects this, because it takes time and patience, is only making greater trouble later on. It is cheaper, after all, to attend to this early. One soon learns that children become reliable first in matters which interest them most, so this gives us the clue. One of the earliest successful projects is the care of pets. The regular feeding of the kitten, the dog, the canary, the gold-fish, or the chickens furnishes just the training children need.

But no one else must ever feed Jamie's pet! Herein lies the secret of the method. If grandma or someone else takes pity on the kitten when she is hungry, Jamie will never take any responsibility for it. And if the emphasis is put on the *privilege* of it, and everyone would be happy to feed little Mittens, but solemnly promises not to, because Mittens belongs to Jamie and likes best the milk he pours for her—then it will be no task for Jamie, but something to look forward to three times a day. At first he will want to do it at least once

an hour! But kittenish digestions are, of course, ruined by eating between meals. Regular feeding is absolutely necessary. Even the family doctor might be consulted on this crucial question. Just how old must a kitten be when it should be fed only three times a day, instead of four or five? Then alas for the day when Jamie rushes into the garden, right from the dinner table, because the little neighbor who came to play had had an earlier dinner—and poor Mittens got no milk! If everybody plays the game, Mittens will soon be hungry enough to plead her own case and rebuke Jamie properly for his neglect. Thus family pets can be made good teachers in the school of Christian living. To have someone really dependent upon him is good for Jamie's soul. It will make quite a man of him, if the habit started by the kitten is kept up by maturer responsibilities, carefully graded to fit his capacity and interests.

It is necessary to create a co-operative mood in the mind of the child. If Jamie once suspects you are "putting anything over on him" your strategy is lost. As President King shrewdly says, "People don't like to be done good to!" This is acutely true of little people. In order to win their co-operation you must pay their price. You must leave your grown-up world and live in their childlike world. The kind of world they like best is a play-world. Weave a spell of make-believe and Jamie will do anything you ask.

The Strategy of Turning Work Into Play

This means that it is good strategy to make a game of everything you can with the children. All healthy children are always ready for a game, and if the spirit of play can be brought into their work, they forget it is

work, and the work gets done by magic. Even for grown folks this is one secret of making the drudgery of life endurable. Some unknown but discerning spirit says:

"There is work that is work,
There is play that is play.
There is play that is work,
There is work that is play;
And one of these four
Is the very best way."

Use your brains to make a game out of the children's work, and it will help to keep you childlike, as well as start their work habits. If it's a question of a painless way to teach little Ruth to dry the dishes, and really like to do it, turn the dishes into people, give them funny names, and the magic of Make-Believe Town will do the rest. It is cheaper than an electric washer and nearly as quick. Besides, there is the valuable by-product —making a little helper out of Ruth and making her like it. The names will depend on the style of the china and the shape of the pitchers, but almost any full-grown one would be Old Lady Brindle, and the little creamer could be Little Miss Jersey, or just Bossy. The glasses are the Tinkle sisters and the cups the Key and Toffee boys, while the big plates are the big children and the little plates the little folks who go to Professor Woggle-Bog's school. He, of course, is the big platter. Nicks on the plates will soon furnish enough individuality to identify them by, and Ruth can use her imagination and give them names suggested by the cracks in the enamel. The older and more disreputable, the merrier! Then, of course, the story grows from day to day, about what happened to all these make-believe folks in Make-Believe Town who lived on Good-Children Street. Have

a different chapter every day—but never play this game except over the dishpan. Be skillful, and Ruth will actually look forward to it and be sorry when the dishes are done!

The Magic of the Story

The reason why it is such good policy to weave a story into the projects of your "character clinic" is because children think in pictures and revel in the use of imagination. Mere words are symbols and the abstract language of adults quite beyond their comprehension. They live in the concrete world of life and action. Nothing else interests them. They like to people their world with little invisible people, who live in the trees and the rose-bushes. One little miss, whom I knew very well, took a magic little playmate with her all the way on a long auto trip to the Rockies. She kept her left hand closed all the time, for that was where the little fairie queen stayed safely. And there was a world of whispering, sometimes, on the back seat, when no one was supposed to be listening!

Simple rime stories are very effective with small children and often teach an effective lesson. Mrs. Betts quotes a successful use of one of the rimes in the Goop book:

"Little scraps of paper,
Little crumbs of food
Make a room untidy
Everywhere they're strewed.

"Can you blame your mother
If she looks severe,
When she says, 'It looks to me
As if the Goops were here'?"[1]

[1] *The Goops and How to Be Them.* Published by Frederick A. Stokes Company, New York. Reprinted by permission of publishers.

Surely, no one wants to be a Goop. The name doesn't sound the least bit encouraging. And when Harry litters everything up and forgets to clean up the litter, it is quite enough to remark casually, "Those Goops have been around again." He runs for the dustpan at once.

Miss Bailey's story about the "Boy Who Forgot to Wash His Face" has made many a washcloth more popular. Why *drive* Harvey every day to wash his face when a few applications of this painless story will cure his delinquency. The story records how its nameless young hero one morning forgot to use the perfectly good washcloth his grandma had knitted for him, but ran out to play, straight from the breakfast table. Not being addicted to the mirror, he failed to notice the jam on his blouse, his mouth, and the tip of his nose, but apparently others did. His pet canary refused to play with him. She was taking her bath. Likewise his pussy. One look at his nose, and her velvet paw went on washing fastidiously. Ditto the ducks, in his little fish pond. It was everybody's bath hour.

"I wonder why no one will play with me," thought the child. Then catching sight of his face, mirrored in the water, he said, "Why, perhaps it's because I am dirty." So home he ran, to use his grandmother's washcloth. Miss Bailey describes it all, with gorgeous and fetching details.[1] Use it a few times, on small boys who need it, and they are likely to become converted to washcloths for life.

The Challenge of the Difficult

Doubtless the reason that so many children are lazy

[1] Bailey, C. S., *Stories for Sunday Telling.*

is because they are related to their parents. One of the lessons all boys and girls must learn is to stop dodging work that is difficult. We have suggested already several kinds of anæsthetics which help to make work painless for children. This little rime, from an unknown source, is another for use with quite young children:

"Two little men were living by a hill;
One was named *Can't*, the other was named *Will*.
Can't said, "I never in the world can climb that hill;"
So there he is at the bottom of it still.

"*Will* said, '*I'll* climb this hill, because I will.'
So there he is, at the top of the hill!
Two little men are living by the hill.
At the bottom is *Can't*. At the *top* is WILL."

Many a young gentleman of three or even four, especially in hilly towns, prefers to climb hills in his carriage. He has the auto habit, like his parents, and, to be sure, is only imitating them. But unless he learns early to face hard things with courage he is likely to join the Great Army of those who seek the Easy Job. Get him out of the habit if you can, if his indulgent father will let you. The above jingle will help to get his little muscle up. Call him *Will* for awhile to remind him of it, and see how his little chest swells up with pride of accomplishment and victories to come! Then he will have a reputation to live up to—and that's an incentive for everybody.

SECURE WILLINGNESS IF POSSIBLE

It makes all the difference in the world whether children do things with a will or a won't. If a boy's will is set against it, because he thinks you are working him, it is bad education to force him to it. If he does it under

protest it creates an active opposition in his whole being against ever doing the thing again. He resents the force of your stronger will. If Billy's chums are going to the circus July 5th, and you insist on his weeding onions instead of going with them, both you and Billy are in for trouble. He suddenly decides that July 5th is the only day all summer that he wants to see the circus, but he *must* go then. And if you keep him at the onions all that afternoon he will hate the very smell of onions the rest of his life! He will never weed onions happily or willingly again, without a vigorous cure. They will always remind him of the day you cheated him out of the joy of life. But meet Billy half way, and by some strategic move eliminate that *"won't"* which is plainly visible in the very set of his neck, as far as you can see him there among the onions—then some basis of co-operation will bring back the spirit of team-work which is the *will to play the game.* If it would suit his business better to weed them in the morning, before he goes with the other boys, encourage him with a bonus, and he will enjoy the circus all the better. Anyway, if he is old enough to weed onions, he is old enough to have a seat in the family council, and consultation on the subject is far more diplomatic than blank orders. This is the little end of a big subject, but it is probably true that farm boys should be made *real partners* very early, in order to secure their genuine co-operation in the work of the farm.

Thus far this rambling chapter has mainly been suggesting methods for securing a willingness on the part of children to become helpful members of the household. It is important thus to lay foundations early, for this is a working world. Not only do most of us need

to acquire the work habit so that we shall be reasonably happy in the days when we earn our own living, but also because our work is the truest expression of our personality and one of the best developers of character.

It is apparent, of course, that in the home character-clinic the chief reason for assigning work-projects to children is not just to get the work done, nor even to train them so that they will do their share of the drudgery in years to come. The chief reason is a religious one: Only thus will they learn to be *helpful*, and in sharing in the mutual service of the home, find the secret and the joy of doing something for those they love and of sharing actively in the co-operative enterprises which they call home. Mothers soon discover it is more work to teach small children to work than to do it themselves. But if they stop trying, and send the children out to play while they themselves do all the work, they are cheating the children out of a real opportunity. How, then, will they develop in the boys and girls the spirit of helpfulness? That is exactly the problem of families who are trying to maintain a real home in an apartment. They have reduced the home work to the vanishing point. Selfish children are apt to be the product of such surroundings, unless other kinds of character-building projects are discovered.

Other Important Traits to Develop

But there are many other traits of character which should be developed in the Christian family life, besides dependableness, helpfulness, truthfulness, and a sturdy willingness to face difficult tasks. Chief among these are self-control, self-respect, a sense of honor, and the spirit of chivalry, which we suggested in Chap-

ter IV as the great moral safeguards of life, for which the home is chiefly responsible. With these should also be listed the ordinary home-spun virtues, such as honesty and fair play. Doctor Sneath, in his book, *Religious Training in the School and Home*, lists twelve family virtues which children should develop, as follows: Obedience, respect, truthfulness, honesty, good manners, helpfulness, love, gratitude, justice, kindness, generosity, and loyalty. He even suggests in detail the exact year in which the acquisition of each of these virtues should be begun!

Such an analytical and rather mechanical method has been justly criticized. It is hardly the natural method for parents to say, "Go to now, let us make this child grateful, for, lo, he has reached the fifth grade." If the acquisition of virtues were undertaken in the same way that a boy-scout accumulates his honor-badges, character would be a patchwork quilt. However, there is much value in the suggestions of Doctor Sneath that parents should not only identify the traits of character which they desire in their children, but also watch for their development and help wisely in the process. He also emphasizes the use of stories as the best means of producing these desired traits, and adds a long and valuable list of carefully selected story material, with titles and sources (see pages 149–151). Parents will find this list very useful in leading them to find many of the best available stories to use with their children, with definite moral and religious results in mind.

Many modern parents observe closely the unfolding of their children's characters, the outcropping of unpleasant traits, as well as the welcome progress in moral attainments. It is not difficult to discover, in the natural

course of events, what the growing child needs to round out his character. Each day or week will bring its problem for special attention. If the spirit of playful comradeship has been maintained since babyhood days, you have retained the child's confidence so that each problem can be frankly faced, in its natural setting, not as an isolated topic for debate, but as a very practical human experience, in which the family happiness and honor are more or less at stake.

Lessons of the Home Playground

The glorious fight for ideals, on which the hope of the world depends, is often won by our boys in their games. It has been often remarked that the victories of the British Empire are first won on the football fields of Eton and Rugby. In a sense it is true that play is the free pursuit of ideals. The earnest player is always trying to improve on his best—to skate more elegantly, to serve better at tennis, to reduce his golf-score, to master the inshoot at curve pitching and place his hits better at base ball. Both play and art help to cultivate character by their pursuit of ideals. It is very evident too that children's games develop character through habit-forming, practice in team-play and quick decisions, and settling the points of right and wrong that constantly arise in the problems of good sportsmanship. Many a tradesman learned fair play as a boy on the athletic field.

Play is the best developer of self-control for children, and this is the very basis of character. In following the rules of the game they learn obedience. In waiting for their turn at the bat they learn patience. These self-imposed rules restrain unruly impulses and build up

the moral reserves against future temptations. Play promotes good health, a cheerful disposition, and a wholesome condition of mind and body, all of which are aids to character. It develops mental alertness and keenness and increases initiative, self-confidence, and leadership.

Play is the most important moral activity of the child, because only in his play does he usually do what he chooses. At work and in school he is obeying the will of others, often quite unwillingly. At his play he makes his own choices, forms his own habits as he pleases, and lives his own independent life. Only when we are really free to make choices does character develop with perfect naturalness. So character is largely formed in leisure hours, for it shows itself most truly in the things we do when we are free. The child's play is joy and freedom in activity.

Some very good friends of the author's have shown eminent wisdom in moving out some five miles from the city of their birth and building a lovely country home in a five-acre lot. The house has every possible modern convenience. It is artistic and beautiful to the last degree. But its most evident characteristic is that it is literally *built around their three growing children.* The feature of the high basement is an attractive big playroom, at the rear, opening out where a fine, sunny playground slopes away toward the south. Even the boys' beloved dog has his own bathtub in the triple garage! And no possible need of the children is neglected. What a world this would be if all children could be as fortunate!

But play facilities for children are too often overlooked in our homes, and with the trend toward apartment living, thousands of families are obliged to send

their children elsewhere for their fun. To be sure, there are city playgrounds, a great boon to the children of the poor and the neglectful rich. But far happier are the children who can play at home. The unsupervised home playground is often a menace to the neighborhood; but this can be regulated by watchful, tactful parents and helpful older brothers. And happy the father who can get some of his own recreation at twilight, getting beaten by his own children at tennis, baseball, tag or even duck-on-the-rock! Such comradeship keeps father young in the eyes of his children—where it really counts most. It convinces the children that he is not so old-fashioned as he looks; therefore his ideas and opinions are still worthy their confidence and respect. He still belongs, and is a regular fellow, if he is not too old to play.

It should go without saying that these projects in character developing will never be wholly successful if conducted simply as problems in ethics. They must always stay on the high plane of home training in religion. They are the application of religious ideals and the Christian spirit to the complex conditions of family living. They are honest attempts to *practice religion.* They should therefore be done in the atmosphere of prayer and with constant recourse to Christian motives. They should be closely connected with the home training in worship, which we studied in our preceding chapter.

By so doing parents will discover that many difficulties which seem insuperable, many problems of conduct and disposition that seem altogether baffling, when approached prayerfully and with unfailing patience, will yield to the appeal of love and devotion, with ultimate victory. And thus it is that each decade witnesses, emerging from the struggles of childhood days in the

shattered life of the household, millions of promising youth, beautiful and strong in their young manhood and womanhood, with Christian characters already formed and partly tested, the finest fruits of the lifetime labor of our devoted American fatherhood and motherhood.

XV

CHRISTIAN MOTIVES FOR GROWING CHARACTERS

When children begin to ask "Why?" our serious troubles begin, for it raises the perplexing question of motives. Young children are so imitative and suggestible that they seldom ask why; but with growing independence they are not satisfied unless they know the reasons why you want them or do not want them to do certain things, especially the latter.

"How shall I see the wrong in an act which I have done and my parents consider wrong, when I see nothing wrong in it?" asks a perplexed high-school girl. And another more specifically asks: "Shall I refuse to go to a dance at a perfectly nice dining place, when my parents object to the place, but when I have always wanted to go there to see what it is like?"

Youth Rejects Authority and Tradition

It is evident that we must not only provide our young folks with better standards of judgment, that they may safely decide what is right and what is wrong, but we must also give them satisfactory reasons. They are constantly facing the necessity for swift moral choices. They must have strong and clear ideals of right living, and back of these Christian ideals they must have high motives to make them powerful. Without the motives, ideals are weak, for they fail to become attitudes. Young people just now are asking more insistently than ever to know what is right. They are taking nothing for

granted. They are refusing to accept unchallenged the opinions of the older generation. In response to their persistent challenge, "Why?" we are forced to seek new motives, fresh reasons for rightness, new appeals to conscience which will convince our youth that there is something, after all, in the old ideals of morals and religion.

The appeal to authority meets with meager response from many of our young folks. Hoary, time-honored traditions are more likely to be ridiculed than reverenced. Their premise seems to be that the new must be true, and the old distinctly out of date and superseded. Even the appeal of the Bible has less weight with many in the court of modern youth. But *Beauty* still reigns there. Their inherent love for the beautiful may still be appealed to successfully. The ugly is positively abhorrent to them. The uncouth and monstrous seem wicked to them, to be avoided like the plague. The loathsome and ugly phases of temptation have no appeal to them; but these, unfortunately, were always the least dangerous.

Appeal to Their Reverence for Beauty

Here is an interesting clue to the moral loyalties of modern young folks. It is not merely suggestive, it is highly practical and has real leverage on character. Let us cultivate in our children the æsthetic sense, for real *taste has positive moral values*, and may prove in the future a greater moral safeguard than we dream. The ideal of the beautiful is, after all, very close to truth and goodness, though perfection must include all three. The truly lovely in the world's finest art should be part of the spiritual heritage of our children; and their spirits

should be vibrant with the rhythm and melody of the noblest music. It will take the crudeness and the coarseness out of them, and make their characters finer and more beautiful.

Someone suggests, "Is not the love of beauty merely a pagan motive, a Greek ideal?" By no means. Let no one imagine that this love of beauty cannot be made a Christian motive—though Puritans never discovered it. Through the avenue of beauty normal minds are as likely to find God as along the line of any other quest, and imagination, where dwells the appreciation of the beautiful, has a vast function in religion. It tests all reality for us. It gives the feel of the real to truth. Through imagination all true art feeds the growing mind and helps the child to know what is real, true, and right, as well as what is genuinely beautiful. The careful selection of pictures for our living rooms, and especially the children's rooms, is a practical part of home religion. The pictures that are constantly seen have a subtle effect upon the taste and the character. Let our children develop a reverence for beauty as well as for truth, and they will have a great new spiritual safeguard against temptations which debase and degrade.

Rescue Conscience From Group Ethics

But if we start with the appeal to their sense of taste and their love for the beautiful, we must not stop there, or we would leave them pagans. The divineness of beauty lies in its kinship to truth and goodness and the fact that all three of these great ideals are capable of stirring the noblest feelings and loyalties. Nor are we safe in resting our case on the appeal to group sentiment. Custom may have developed most codes of

ethics, but public opinion is not the highest arbiter of morals. If we accustom our daughter to accept the rightness of the local group conscience, she is simply on the level of mob morals. And the one thing which mob psychology teaches most certainly is that the conscience of the group is usually lower and less trustworthy than many individual consciences in the group.

For a time in boy-life the gang is the boy's censor of all ethics. What the gang says, goes. But it is a kind of slavery, from which he should rescue himself as soon as his personal conscience becomes strong enough to lean on. The real reason both girls and boys get the habit of trusting only the social conscience of their group is because their own conscience always has to grow by experience, like judgment in any other field. They feel their weakness. Often they honestly do not know what is right. The new situation catches them unprepared, for they find the clue in no past experience. Instead of trusting adult advice, of which they are surfeited, they too often turn to their own peers, and the group conscience settles it. They overlook the fact that a dozen young judgments are really no more experienced or trustworthy than one!

Thus the habit of trusting the public opinion of the group has its origin, and all too soon it grows into conformity. And nothing seems right which "the crowd" disapproves. While excessive modesty reigns skirts must trail the ground, and a girl dare not show a well-clad ankle without blushing. But with skirts knee-high, as soon as "the crowd" says, "Socks down or off," down they roll or off they go, or the adolescent girl is woefully unhappy! When adult instructions interfere with the decisions of the adolescent court there is serious trouble.

But by and by the day comes when independent spirits dare to fly alone. A solo flight is a great emancipator. An individual opinion, based on growing experience, dares to challenge the group, and a new joy is discovered, the satisfaction of being oneself, of being individual. It takes courage, but it yields self-respect.

Prudential Motives Not Quite Christian

Most of the crowd never take the solo flight. They remain at the mercy of public opinion. To be sure, public opinion furnishes a balance-wheel for society and is often conservative. It does provide some moral safeguards. It is a good thing for all of us that the fear of losing reputation is a strong urge against wrongdoing. This motive can be effectively used with young people. It often keeps them from flying the track and wrecking their lives. But it is not a high motive. It is simply an appeal to prudence, after all. And we must have higher motives than that. Too many of us, young and old, stay on the low level of prudential ethics, doing right because it pays. Honesty is the best policy? Surely, it is well for the boy to discover it and to make sure of it. But we must help him find a nobler reason than that for living an honest life.

Right here comes in the necessity for Christian education, to supplement the best the world can do for our children without it; for Christian education is the process of learning Christlike ideals, attitudes, motives, and habits, through training in worship and the practice of Christian living and service, under the inspiration of the Bible seers and all great teachers. It is the spiritualizing of experience with the help of Jesus Christ.

The Value of the Lesser Loyalties

The lesser loyalties, group loyalties, are not to be despised. There is strong motive power for boys and girls in family pride, patriotism, loyalty to friends and to the school, the club and the team. The team-work developed on the playground is a mighty moral factor. It teaches the nobleness of altruism. It gives the boy a taste of the joy of sacrifice, to subordinate himself to the good of the group, to play the game unselfishly, providing "interference" while the left half-back runs with the ball and scores the touch-down; or making a sacrifice hit to help another player score. It's all for the team and for the school. It teaches real loyalty and self-control.

Loyalty to friends is also a noble motive which exalts character and makes it beautiful. It grows with the years, as friendships are discovered to be the greatest assets of life. To betray a friend, as Judas did, is found to be the depth of baseness. The appeal to help a friend seldom fails. It is one of the strongest of Christian motives. Loyalty to country is also a strong motive with our school children, taught by the ritual of the flag; and though it is not yet interpreted in terms of the civic duties of peace, as distinctly as in terms of the sacrifice of war, it is a great challenge to conscience always.

No less strong is the motive of loyalty to home. Family pride, within reasonable limits, is a great safeguard for a boy and often prevents his stooping to baseness which would dishonor his father's name—a precious part of his heritage. Right-minded youth can be successfully appealed to, to honor the family ideals, even when they cannot accept their parents' opinions. All these funda-

mental loyalties furnish real motive power for character. They help to keep our youth morally strong. They are lesser loyalties only because there is one supreme loyalty which transcends them, in its supreme right to their allegiance and in its greater spiritual energy to vitalize their ideals and make them live and conquer.

The Motive of Loyalty to Christ

This supreme loyalty is loyalty to the Master of the Christian conscience, Jesus Christ. Some may say that the ultimate motive for doing right is because goodness is the Will of God. This idea is very little help to children, for it is too abstract and remote. For just this reason "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us," that we might *see* the will of God, demonstrated in a visible, tangible, glorious life in human history.

Ideals are ineffective things when stated in abstract principles. The ideal, "We must be loyal to our friends," means only so many words to us, until we see it clothed in the character of some Jonathan who proved again and again that he loved his friend David more than himself, or of some modern hero who gives his life to save his friend. It is only when the ideal takes human form, incarnated in flesh, that it becomes concrete, vivid, powerful, and challenges our consciences and our wills.

The combination of all the world's noblest and purest ideals in the heroic personality of Jesus Christ, who lived the human life of God, makes him our Saviour from sin and low ideals and the Master of our consciences and wills. In him all noble ideals were made flesh and dwelt among us. In him we see what perfect goodness is. In him our love for beauty finds satisfaction, as we discover his moral perfection. "For Christ's

sake" is the highest motive that can be put up to a youthful conscience, to help in the struggle for character, for in Christ they see all the best that is in them and in all they admire.

The very best we can hope to do for our youth, to crown all their moral training, is to lead them into vital friendship with Jesus Christ, till they seek his Saviourhood and accept his Mastership over their lives. All our technic of moral education is machinery with very little steam until we apply this supreme spiritual motivation to make its ideals adequate, incandescent, powerful, and we learn to live again the spirit of the Christ. The regular custom of sincere worship in his spirit, supplemented by faithful study of the record of his life, will intensify this life-giving friendship, until it grows into a masterful loyalty to him and his ideals. If the love of Christ is really deep in the heart of youth, the Christ ideal, concrete, vividly personalized, powerful, will dominate his imagination, control his imagery, and motivate his conduct. There is no other sure basis for Christian character. Christ will help our youth to live the victorious life.

XVI

HOME AND CHURCH CO-OPERATION

THIS book is a plea for an aggressive program of religious education in American homes. It is the expression of the author's belief that there are no real substitutes for parents; and that the welfare of children requires a more thorough study of the character process in Christian families, and a more vigorous attempt to solve the moral and religious problems of childhood *in the home.*

We have reviewed the recent startling changes in family life in America, its transfer of most of its functions to other social agencies in the city, the increase of divorce and broken homes, and other signs of disintegration. We have renewed our faith in religion as the most effective stabilizer of the family, and have discovered that a home-centered life, with Christian ideals at the heart of it, usually makes the family permanent and successful. We have outlined a program of developing the Christian experience and religious nurture of the family, including home training in worship, home instruction in religion, and the problems of religious habits, ideals, and motives for growing characters, from the family point of view.

We feel certain that these supreme interests of children and youth can never be adequately cared for independently of the home. The issues involved are too transcendent, the responsibilities concerned are too momentous, for parents to abdicate them. They must

accept them as their highest duty and do their utmost to meet them.

But we do not believe the modern family can do this task alone. Life is too complex. The social contacts and social pressures of the children are too numerous for that. After your child reaches school age there are many centers of influence that affect his experience and growing character. They must all be reckoned with, for society as a whole is the great educator, not any part of it alone.

The Moral Help of the Public School

Co-operation, then, is vitally necessary between the home and the other forces of the community that share in this responsibility, especially the church and the school. To a great extent the public school is serving the family, not simply by educating the children in the ordinary sense, but also by helping to form their characters. The social trend in education is revolutionizing American schools. Education has become a social process of living in the community life of the school. Thus the children are taught to be socially efficient and to become good citizens, useful members of society. They are taught to co-operate with others in the family, the school, the club, the state, the church, and in business and all social relations. All this makes stronger characters.

More definitely still, the National Council of Education has thus set the goal for public education: "The development of a key virtue of individual strength of character, self-respect, self-control, justice, generosity, cheerfulness, pleasantness, and self-sacrifice; a personal sense of responsibility for the performance of all law

as well as the democratic essentials not required by law." Christian people are thankful for this spirit of co-operation in the great problems of character, on the part of our school men; but the wisest school men acknowledge their need of organized religion to help them solve the problem. Sound character must have religious motives and ideals, and these cannot be taught in our public schools without violating the First Amendment to our national Constitution.

Why Homes Need the Help of the Church

The active good will of all Christian families is due every constructive agency which helps build the community. Parents will show this good will by cordial friendship with teachers and membership in parent-teachers associations when possible. But the closest loyalty of the family should be given *the church* when it is really functioning to help their children. When the church is neglecting its opportunity with the young folks, it is no one's fault but the parents, for they can have as effective a church as they wish to make it; and, with right leadership, the church can be a genuine religious home for the children and youth, a "House of the Interpreter," to teach them the values and inner meanings of life.

There are several very evident reasons why the home needs the help of the church with its children. The church furnishes a wholesome social life for young folks that is beyond the power of the home to provide for them. It provides a specialized program of religious education that in many details supplements the best instruction in religion the home can furnish. It should furnish, and often does, trained teachers who know

more about the Bible than the parents do, and understand better the character needs of the children. And the minister, if trained for his modern task, is an expert religious educator, anxious to supplement, at every point, the work of parents with their children.

Most churches provide opportunities for the young people to share in various religious activities, which they need for their development. They are free to express their religious convictions and aspirations in their own meetings for social worship. Often they have the chance to participate in biblical dramatics and pageantry with its unique educational value as well as service of the church; and their musical talents should find outlet in the choir, and in many other ways their willingness to help will be used to advantage by skillful pastors. The home that does not link itself and its children to an institution which exists chiefly for their benefit is missing one of its chief opportunities. The active church enlists its youth in its ministry to the sick, the poor, the neglected, and the shut-ins. It sends them to hospitals and the homes of the crippled and aged, to sing favorite hymns on Sunday afternoons, a service which is greatly appreciated, and which increases the young folks' own capacity for sympathy. And in all the church's program of community service young people are given an increasing share.

In so-called family churches, where an evening preaching service is seldom found necessary, the pastor and his wife often devote Sunday evening to the young people, and call it "young people's night." They gather around the cheerful fireplace in the church parlors in the winter, sometimes extending the program for two or three hours, while the young folks come and go; sometimes beginning

with supper together, sometimes with light refreshments, and a sing around the piano to close the day. Young people in the city, far from home, find a welcome in such churches that is gratefully accepted, especially in the rooming-house section, where the church is really the only substitute for home.

Co-operation With the Church School

It is the school of the church with which Christian parents should co-operate most closely. It really exists as an adjunct to the home, to supplement its program of religious training. When the family fails to keep up living contacts with the church school there is serious loss for both. Yet a large majority of parents merely *send* their children to the church school, just as to day school, and then ask no questions and offer no help. This ignoring of the teachers is discouraging to them, and may account for the fact that most of them never call to get acquainted with the parents of their pupils, as, of course, they should. Common courtesy should recognize the volunteer service of teachers as deserving at least the thanks of the parents; and they really should be made honorary members of the family.

Parents should keep informed of the progress of each child in the church school just as surely as in public school. They should know what course of study is being followed, and exactly what home work is expected, and what the parents can do to help. In these days of graded lessons, with their great variety, this is not always easy. It requires rather frequent conferences or phoning, between parents and teacher, to know what definite objectives in character growth the teacher of each child has in mind for the month.

And more important even than assistance in learning the lesson is the planning of home projects to supplement those planned by the teacher. When our religious education programs are planned with finer strategy we shall have co-operative projects in which both home and church school work together for the benefit of each child. The first step in this direction was taken by the Episcopal Educational Board, when a few years ago they attached regular monthly letters to parents, connected with every month's graded lessons.

Parents Whom Grown Children Call Blessed

Certain it is, the homes that co-operate most closely with their children's teachers in church school are the homes that derive the most benefit therefrom. Parents who neglect the church school altogether give notice to their children that they regard religious education as an unimportant task. The parents who do their best to keep in touch with every social agency which is endeavoring to serve their children's interest and develop their characters, thereby intensify the family's own strong emphasis upon the transcendent importance of the spiritual and eternal meanings of life. It is the children of such homes, who in long years to come, after life has tried and tested them and not found them wanting, rise up in gratitude to call their parents blessed.

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